Coping With the Gods

Religions in the Graeco-Roman World

Editors

D. Frankfurter
J. Hahn
H.S. Versnel

VOLUME 173

Coping With the Gods

Wayward Readings in Greek Theology

By
H.S. Versnel

BRILL

LEIDEN • BOSTON
2011

On the cover: 'Titan' from 1978 by Igor Mitoraj. Marble, 130 cm × 25 cm × 31 cm. Photograph by Erik Hesmerg, courtesy of the Museum Beelden aan Zee, Scheveningen/the Hague, the Netherlands. Reproduced with kind permission.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Versnel, H.S.
Coping with the gods : wayward readings in Greek theology / by H.S. Versnel.
p. cm. — (Religions in the Graeco-Roman world, ISSN 0927-7633 ; v. 173)
Includes bibliographical references (p.) and indexes.
ISBN 978-90-04-20490-4 (hardback : alk. paper) 1. Greece—Religion. I. Title. II. Series.

BL783.V47 2011
292.2—dc22

2011008358

ISSN 0927-7633
ISBN 978 90 04 20490 4

Copyright 2011 by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands.
Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill, Global Oriental, Hotei Publishing, IDC Publishers, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers and VSP.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher.

Brill has made all reasonable efforts to trace all right holders to any copyrighted material used in this work. In cases where these efforts have not been successful the publisher welcomes communications from copyright holders, so that the appropriate acknowledgements can be made in future editions, and to settle other permission matters.

Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use is granted by Koninklijke Brill NV provided that the appropriate fees are paid directly to The Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Suite 910, Danvers, MA 01923, USA.
Fees are subject to change.

For my beloved Isabel and Liselot
Τοῦτο ἔχω δῶρον ἐξ ἀθανάτων πάντων

Misschien betekent het helemaal niets en moest het alleen maar rijmen.

(Perhaps it does not mean anything at all; perhaps it had only to rhyme)

Isabel (in her seventh year)

Je moet de klassiekste, geheimste woorden schrijven en niemand begrijpt ze. Ik zal ze op de piano voordoen.

(You must write the most classic, most secret words and nobody understands them. I'll play them for you on the piano)

Liselot (in her fifth year)

CONTENTS

Abbreviations xi

Introduction 1

Chapter One
Many Gods: Complications of Polytheism 23
1. Order versus Chaos 23
The Greek pantheon: kosmos or chaos? 26
2. Ingredients for Chaos 37
In search of identities 37
Names and surnames: one god or many? 60
3. Creating Order: Taking Place 88
"The gods who dwell in our city" 88
Beyond the polis border (and back) 102
Ducking out: gods in personal religiosity 119
4. Conclusions 142

Chapter Two
The Gods: Divine Justice or Divine Arbitrariness? 151
1. Introduction 151
Controversial diction in archaic poetry 151
Modern Voices 160
2. Homer 163
3. Herodotus 179
Two tales, many perspectives 179
Modern voices: fear of diversity 187
4. Saving the Author 190
5. Solon Again 201
6. Once More: Chaos or Order? 212
Paratactic multiplicity 213
'Gnomologisches Wissen' 218
The rehabilitation of parataxis 226
Thinking in gnomai—speaking in parataxis 229
7. Putting to the Test: Hesiod 231
8. Envoy 234

Chapter Three
One God: Three Greek Experiments in Oneness 239
1. Introduction 239
2. One and Many: The God(s) of Xenophanes 244
One or many? 248
One and many 256
Concluding remarks 266
3. One is Many: The Gods, the God, and the Divine 268
On singular plurals 268
Concluding remarks 278
4. "One is the God" 280
Praising the god 280
Aretalogy 283
Nine characteristics of henotheistic religion 289
The nature of oneness in henotheistic religion 296
Questions of origin 301
Concluding remarks 303
5. Conclusion 304

Chapter Four
A God: Why is Hermes Hungry? 309
1. Hungry Hermes and Greedy Interpreters 309
2. Hermes: The Human God in the Hymn 319
3. Hermes: The Eternal Dupe in the Fable 327
Burlesques 329
Paying a social call 332
4. Hermes: The Present God in Visual Art 335
Socializing 337
More burlesques 343
Herms and sacrifice 348
5. Hungry Hermes: The Sacrificial Meal 352
"The warm splanchna which I used to gobble up" 353
"The titbits Hermes likes to eat" 364
"Companion of the feast" (δαιτὸς ἑταίρε) 367
6. Conclusion 370
Plates for Chapter Four are on pages 338–339, 344–345, and 377

Chapter Five
GOD: THE QUESTION OF DIVINE OMNIPOTENCE 379
1. God: Self and Other 379
Self 379
Other 384
Self and other 385
Gods: self and other 388
Some inferences 391
2. God: Powerful *or* All-Powerful? 396
3. Miracles in Double Perspective: The Case of Asklepios 400
4. God: Powerful *and* All-Powerful 422
Omnipotence, ancient philosophers and modern theologians 427
Inconsistency in religious expression 431
5. Conclusions 436

Chapter Six
PLAYING (THE) GOD: DID (THE) GREEKS BELIEVE IN THE DIVINITY OF THEIR RULERS? 439
1. Men into Gods 439
A swollen-headed doctor: the case of Menekrates 439
A charismatic prince: the case of Demetrios Poliorketes 444
2. Modern Perplexities 456
3. The Construction of a God 460
Language 460
Performance 463
4. Did (The) Greeks Believe in the Divinity of their Rulers? 465
5. Ritual Play: Sincere Hypocrisy 470
6. Birds Into Gods: Comic Theopoetics 480
7. Making a God: A Multiple Perspective Approach 485

EPILOGUE 493

APPENDICES 499
I. Grouping the Gods 501
All the Gods 501
The Twelve Gods 507

II. Unity or Diversity—One God or Many? A Modern Debate 517
III. Drive Towards Coherence in Two Herodotus-Studies 527
IV. Did the Greeks Believe in their Gods? 539

Bibliography 561

Indices
Index of Passages Cited 577
Greek Words 584
General Index 587

ABBREVIATIONS

Books and articles for which I use the name-date system are given in the bibliography. Works that are cited by abbreviated title only are given here. The abbreviations of periodical titles follow the conventions of *l'Année philologique.* Corpora of inscriptions are referred to as (e.g.) *I.Priene,* according to the conventions of *SEG*, or form part of the series *Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien* (1972–).

ABV	J.D. Beazley, *Attic Black-figure Vase painters* (Oxford 1956)
AE	*L'Année épigraphique* (Paris 1888–)
ANRW	H. Temporini & W. Haase (edd.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* (Berlin 1972–)
ARV	J.D. Beazley, *Attic Red-figure Vase painters* I–III (Oxford 1963[2])
BE	Bulletin épigraphique (annually in *Revue des études grècques*)
CAF	T. Kock, *Comicorum Atticorum Fragmenta* (1880–1888)
CEG	P.A. Hansen, *Carmina epigraphica graeca saeculorum VIII–V a.Chr.n.* (Berlin-New York 1981–)
CIG	*Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum* (1828–1877)
CIL	*Corpus inscriptionum latinarum* (1863–)
CIRB	*Corpus Inscriptionum Regni Bosporani* (Leningrad 1965)
DDD	K. van der Toorn, B. Becking & P.W. van der Horst (edd.), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Leiden etc. 1995)
D-K	H. Diels & W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Berlin 1951[6])
EBGR	A. Chaniotis (ed.), Epigraphic Bulletin for Greek Religion (annually in *Kernos*)
EG	G. Kaibel, *Epigrammata Graeca ex lapidibus conlecta* (Berlin 1848–1859)
ER	M. Eliade (ed.), *The Encylopedia of Religion* (New York 1987, 2005[2])
ERE	*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (1908–1922)
FGrHist	F. Jacobi, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Berlin-Leiden 1923–1958)

GGR	M.P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* I–II (Munich 1967[3], 1961[2])
HrwG	H. Cancik *et alii* (edd.), *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe* (Stuttgart 1988–2001)
HWP	*Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (Darmstadt 1971–2007)
IC	M. Guarducci (ed.), *Inscriptiones Creticae* I–IV (1935–1950)
IG	*Incriptiones Graecae* (1873–)
IGR	R. Cagnat *e.a.* (edd.), *Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes* I–IV (Paris 1911–1927)
ILS	H. Dessau (ed.), *Inscriptiones Latinae selectae* I–III (Berlin 1892–1916)
KRS	G.S. Kirk, J.E. Raven & M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts* (Cambridge 1983[2])
LfgrE	*Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos* (Göttingen 1955–)
LIMC	*Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (Zürich 1981–2009)
LSAM	F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrés de l'Asie Mineure* (Paris 1955)
LSCG	F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrés des cités grècques* (Paris 1969)
LSJ	H.G. Liddell, R. Scott & H.S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford 1940[2])
LSS	F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrés des cités grècques. Supplément* (Paris 1962)
NDIEC	G.H.R. Horsley *et alii* (edd.), *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity* (1981–)
NGSL	E. Lupu, *Greek Sacred Law. A Collection of New Documents* (Leiden 2005)
NP	*Der neue Pauly* (Stuttgart 1996–2003)
OCD	*Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford 1996[3])
OGIS	W. Dittenberger (ed.), *Orientis Graecae Inscriptiones Selectae* I–II (Leipzig 1903–1905)
PCG	R. Kassel & C. Austin, *Poetae Comici Graeci* (1983–1991)
PMG	D.L. Page, *Poetae Melici Graeci* (Oxford 1962)
PGM	K. Preisendanz *et alii* (edd.), *Papyri graecae magicae* I–II (Stuttgart 1973–1974)
P.Oxy	*The Oxyrynchus Papyri* (London 1898)
RAC	*Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* (Stuttgart 1950–)
RE	*Pauly's Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaften* (Stuttgart-Munich 1893–)

RGG	*Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (1957–65[3]; 1998–2007[4])
RML	W.H. Roscher *et alii*, *Ausführliches Lexicon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie* (Leipzig 1884–1937)
SB	F. Preisigke & F. Bilabel, *Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Aegypten* (Berlin 1926)
SEG	*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* (1923–1971, New Series ed. H.W. Pleket *et alii*, Amsterdam 1976–)
SGO	R. Merkelbach & J. Stauber, *Steinepigramme aus dem griechischen Osten* I–V (Stuttgart und Leipzig 1998–2004)
SIRIS	L. Vidman, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Religionis Isiacae et Sarapiacae* (Berlin 1969)
Staatsverträge	H. Bengtson, *Die Staatsverträge des Altertums* I–III (Munich 1962–1969)
Suppl.Mag.	R.W. Daniel & F. Maltomini, *Supplementum Magicum* I–II (Opladen 1990–1992)
SVF	H.F.A. von Arnim, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* I–III (Stuttgart 1903 = 1968)
Syll.	W. Dittenberger *et alii, Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum* I–IV (Leipzig 1915–1924[3])
TAM	*Tituli Asiae Minoris* (Vienna 1901–)
TER UNUS	H.S. Versnel, *TER UNUS. Isis, Dionysos and Hermes: Three Studies in Henotheism* (Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion I, Leiden 1990)
ThesCRA	*Thesaurus Cultus et Rituum antiquorum* I–V (Basel-Los Angeles 2004)
ThR	*Theologische Realenzyklopädie* (Berlin 1977–2007)
Tod	M.N. Tod, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions* I (Oxford 1946[2])—II (1948)
TrGF	B. Snell, R. Kannicht & St. Radt, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (Göttingen 1986–)
TWNT	R. Kittel *et alii*, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart 1933–1979)

INTRODUCTION

> Pas dan zal ik tegen hem zeggen dat ik denk dat het een schrijver bij ieder boek dat hij schrijft telkens weer overkomt dat hij bang zal zijn eraan te sterven, dat ik het niet zo'n gekke angst vind om te denken dat een boek je het leven kan kosten.
>
> Connie Palmen *I.M*

Words of Gratitude

This book is based on the Sather Lectures that I gave at the University of California at Berkeley in spring 1999. These words evoke happy memories and feelings of gratitude that merit further clarification. Even given the exceptional quality of its faculty, its wealth of material scholarly amenities, the grandeur of its campus and the splendour of the Bay Area, it cannot be an unqualified pleasure to serve the university of California at Berkeley as a member of the Department of Classics. The annual advent of yet another fresh Sather professor, who, going by the panegyrical portrayal of the Sather chair in the letter of invitation, cannot be blamed for deeming herself the world's top mastermind, is only the briefest summary of a wide array of arduous obligations. Regular participation in the time consuming (as I am told) explorations of the Sather committee, followed by the departmental disputes concerning the qualifications of a new candidate, not seldom ending up in a screaming row (as I am told); a moral commitment to attending six Sather lectures—or at least some (or one) of them—on a subject miles out of one's own field of interest—; cheerfully complying with (as in my case) the request to mend the English of one or more lectures including the pronunciation; taking the genius out for lunch before one of his lectures or accommodating one of the receptions after it. All this prettied up with the bonus of having at least one certainty in life, namely, that a member of the department will never taste the glory of a Sather professorate. This bouquet of corollaries might easily deter scholars of a less noble and selfless disposition from joining the Berkeley Classics Department.

Hence, instead of detailing a long list of colleagues who showered me with their kindness and hospitality in any of the qualities just

listed (and hence not even commemorating the party at which I was regaled on a sizzling sucking pig on the spit), I feel that the best way of expressing my gratitude is by wholeheartedly thanking all colleagues present at the time for never having made me notice how demanding all these obligations must have been.

As to the participants in my seminar on ancient magic, I am still looking back with delight to those magical hours in the company of a fine and enthusiastic bunch of students. On being asked they hastened to instruct me that an A was the normal rating for normal fulfilment of normal assignments, while B and C were functionless folkloristic relics like the human appendix, never to be put into use. On sharing this—in Dutch perspective suspicious[1]—information with the Chair he told me that indeed I was misinformed: besides A one could also give an A+.[2] This tip now proved very opportune. Albeit clearly more versed in Latin prose composition (clausula included) than in the intricacies of such magical strings as MASOLABEO MAMAXOMAXO ENKOPTODIT, the class quickly adapted and it soon turned out that the rating A+ came in handy. If, on the other hand, not all participants struck me as being conspicuously more gifted than their Dutch colleagues, yet they all did display a remarkably greater eagerness to pronounce (and defend) an opinion (whatever opinion). I keep hoping that the sometimes hilarious fits of laughter during our sessions were not exclusively due to my more audacious ventures in the pronunciation of non-existent American words. In sum: Guys, thank you for putting up with me. I loved every day of my stay at Berkeley.

This, then, is the right moment for an exception to the rule by lauding two of the Berkeley friends for their invaluable help. Laura Gibbs, by common consent the pivot of the magic class, omniscient guide and generous rescuer in cases of emergency (very much including the intricacies of the computer), threatened to break off her friendship unless I sent her the manuscript of the book for inspection. Concentrating on the main text she showered me with suggestions, corrections, and heartening comments. In the meantime, Donald Mastronarde, hospitable and helpful chairman in my Berkeley year, had accepted the task to assess the book for publication on behalf of the Sather committee.

---

[1] For clarity's sake, the Dutch rating goes from 1 up to 10 and I have yet to meet the colleague who would favour putting 1 through 8 out of action.

[2] To be honest, he also suggested the option A-, which for rhetorical reasons I preferred to leave unmentioned in the main text.

Far exceeding this assignment he meticulously scrutinized the total text, including footnotes and punctuation, saving it from a hoard of typos and errors (the English preposition will always remain a treacherous pitfall to (for?) the non-native speaker) and an occasional very embarrassing misinterpretation of a Greek text. That his knowledge of the Greek language (including the accent) far excels mine is nothing to be ashamed of, but his corrections in French, German and other citations set me purple with shame. A magician on the computer, he also conjured my antiquated GreekKeys Universal into Unicode Greek. I have not been able to find the appropriate words to adequately express my gratitude for the efforts of these two magnanimous benefactors.

It should not be taken as a lack of gratitude, on the other hand, if I shall not comply with the modish lore of the preface to spend half its space on an exhaustive list of academic institutes, audiences and hosts due to whose hospitality and endurance I had the occasion of trying out each of my lectures more than once. One of the reasons for my reticence lies in what I believe to be the real function of such a *polyonymia*, for which see p. 54 f. of this book. The ever increasing number of these guest lectures, I hasten to add, was directly related to the inordinate amount of time that has elapsed between giving and publishing my Sather lectures. I am particularly grateful for the fact that, besides stimulating correction, clarification, and above all reconsideration, these try-outs helped me to constantly keep in mind the necessity of publishing the book before the predicate after its title in the website list of Sather professors would shift from 'not yet published' into 'not published'. Recently this urge received some extra impetus from the wish to have the book out before Robert Parker publishes his Sather lectures.

On no account, however, may I omit to express *disertis verbis* my deep gratitude for the generous and enduring hospitality offered to me over the years by my friend Angelos Chaniotis, at New York University and above all at the Seminar für Alte Geschichte at Heidelberg. I realize that this book would never have been finished without the multiple, often extended, periods of my stay in this ideal ambiance and the personal stimulation by my host as well as by that other ambassador of Greek hospitality, Eftychia Stavrianopoulou.

That the present final words in the process of completing this book are being written at the Fondation Hardt, "that classicists' haven where a week's work equals a month's work at home," may be taken as symbolic. Numerous have been my visits over the years and they have

been seminal to the genesis of this book. One last time I sing a song of praise on—to restrict myself to the friends of old—unforgettable Suzanne, Bernard, and Heidi.

On the Contents of the Book

When I received the frightening invitation for the Sather lectures in 1996, the one responsibility that did not really agitate me was that about the choice of the subject matter.[3] After the 'ritual craze' of the second part of the last century (to which I confess complicity) I thought it might be time for a return to the gods of the Greeks. And as its title indicates that is what this book is about. Nearly all topics of the present book have a prehistory in my research or at least in my interest over the years since the seventies of the last century. In my *TER UNUS* of 1990 I expressed my aspiration to continue my research on modern reactions to dissonance and inconsistency as apparent in issues such as, first, the bewildering divergence in the assessments of polytheistic systems as exemplified by Jean-Pierre Vernant and Walter Burkert; secondly, the archaic Greek struggle with theodicy—divine arbitrariness versus divine justice—; and third, the divergent responses to divine rulership among both Greek contemporaries and modern scholars. My wish has been fulfilled and its upshot can be found in the present book. Polytheism had always had a prominent place in my teaching, but so far this had not resulted in a publication. My ideas can now be found in Chapter I. On the second topic mentioned I gave a paper at a Bristol conference "From Myth to Logos?" of 1996. I did not make it available for publication in the conference proceedings[4] but reserved it for the Sather lectures: Chapter II is a radically revised and expanded version of that paper. On ruler cult I published one of my first articles (in Dutch). Particularly in this case I was happy to obtain an opportunity to rethink the whole issue, which now appears

[3] Remaining feelings of anxiety were soothed away by a very reassuring passage from the Sather website (quoted from Joseph Fontenrose): "There are now [1970] about fifty volumes of Sather Lectures published, valuable contributions to their fields, although, as one might expect, some are better than others, and not many attain the eminence of,—for example, Dodds's *The Greeks and the Irrational,* Shorey's *Platonism,* Nilsson's *The Mycenaean Origin of Greek Mythology,* Page's *History and the Homeric Iliad*, Kirk's *Myth*, Vermeule's *The Greek View of Death*."

[4] R. Buxton, *From Myth to Reason? Studies in the Development of Greek Thought* (Oxford 1999). See for some background information below Ch. II n. 1.

as Chapter VI. Chapter III is the only one that in a more concise form has appeared in print (Porter 2000, 79–163).

That, over the years, insights on all these subjects have undergone sometimes considerable development and change, is a matter of course. Even during the fifteen years since I began my research for the present book the rapid progress in scholarship sometimes has caught up with my ideas as laid out in the lectures. This never necessitated radical modifications of my own ideas. It did mean, *inter alia*, that interpretive strategies similar to the ones I had initiated in my works on *Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion* (1990 and 1993) and which in a more elaborated form I continue putting to the test in the present book, in the meantime had independently found niches in the works of others.

To give a few examples (which all will be dealt with *in extenso* in the relevant chapters). Suggestions about the double (or multiple) nature of divine identities depending on the contexts in which they operated (Ch. I) were rather rare when I embarked on trying them out with my students in the seventies of the last century. Though initially not very popular due to the influence of the then so-called structuralistic approach of the 'École de Paris', they have been gaining ground since the nineties and are now widespread in recent scholarship. As will become apparent however, heated discussions continue to rage to the present day and hence validate further reflection. In the discussion on ruler cult (Ch. VI) a landslide has taken place. While a number of scholars including myself (1973) had already suggested that modern distinctions such as the 'genuine' versus the 'political' nature of its religiosity were leading into a deadlock, it was the study of Simon Price 1984 that turned the scales and opened new perspectives. However, by simultaneously launching his first crusade against the use of the modern term 'belief/believe' in the study of Greek religion he risked closing the door on upcoming new insights in and redefinitions of the notion 'belief'. When, for the present occasion, I continued following my own track by introducing new approaches to an understanding of the religious overtones of ruler cult this called for a preliminary critical discussion of the now fashionable idea that, as one title has it, "The Athenians did not believe in their gods." I soon found that recently scholars of different denominations have been testing alternative strategies concerning the notion 'belief' which turned out to be of great benefit to my own argument (the results can be found in Appendix IV). Comparably, recent trends in linguistic pragmatics

and speech-theory as well as in gnomic expression advanced my own understanding of what, in Ch. II, I had tried to argue before I spotted these new approaches, a gratifying experience indeed.

All the same it may occur that an approach which, fifteen years ago, might claim some originality, is not so 'wayward' anymore. Imagine my relief when I recently discovered that 'the least' the official Sather rules require is "a new synthesis." The more so since one of my major goals, particularly with the first three chapters, was to offer the reader (including, with any luck, both interested general readers and students in classics or religious studies) a more or less comprehensive introduction into some of the most seminal issues of ancient Greek religion. This may also justify their unusual size, which may perhaps be condoned by viewing them not as immoderate excrescences of chapters but as mercilessly pruned condensations of the monographs that their subject matter would have merited.

Turning to the contents of the present study, it first should be noted that the book may be understood as being divided into two parts even if it is not presented as such in visual form. The central theme of the first three chapters can be summarized as 'the systematics' or 'syntax' of the divine world: how did polytheism work, how did (the) Greeks make sense of the inscrutable divine meddling in and with human life, and how did monistic and pluralistic conceptions of the divine world relate? The latter three chapters are concerned with questions about divine nature and qualities, more especially with correspondences and tensions between human and divine features in the nature of the gods.

Chapter I. (MANY GODS) treats Greek polytheism. Since the lecture opened the last Sather series of the twentieth century I decided that it should at least present a brief comparative discussion of the positions of the two greatest late twentieth-century champions on Greek religion: Jean-Pierre Vernant and Walter Burkert. The first regards Greek polytheism as an orderly, transparent system, with well-defined boundaries and a symbolic meaning of each of the different divine 'powers' in meaningful relationship with others. The second characterizes Greek polytheism as "potentially chaotic." In this chapter it is argued that both views have their merits but each at a different level of discourse and viewed from a different perspective. If indeed a potential chaos prevailed, Greeks had their own ways of coping with it. They had an extensive range of divine images in store, and boasted an uncommon capacity of evoking different identities of a god in rapidly

shifting perspectives, generating (seemingly) incompatible statements to the distress of the modern observer. By switching between diverse registers of ordering, for instance (but not only) between the worlds of myth and cult, or between national (Hellenic), local (of the *polis*), and personal or group-religiosity (e.g. in henotheistic forms of religion), they managed to elude the chaotic potential of the Greek pantheon. For them the idea that there is one Zeus with many different epithets (predicates, functions, localities) was no less valid than the idea that there are many different Zeuses varying according to myth, cult, place. (Late) modern scholars as a rule have serious difficulties in handling such *coincidentiae oppositorum* and hence tend to ignore, downplay, smooth out or deny the inherent inconsistencies. Ancient Greeks, on the other hand, could cope with their inconsistent gods by avoiding mixing up their different contextual registers.

Chapter II. (THE GODS) examines the implications and complications of the well-known Greek tendency to attribute sudden changes in human life, either fortunate or, more often, catastrophic ones, to the interference of a supernatural power under the name of Zeus or anonymously referred to as 'the gods' or 'the god'. Here it was inevitable to revive the great debate between two most successful Sather Professors, Eric Dodds and Hugh Lloyd-Jones, the first arguing for a gradual evolution from an a-moral (arbitrary) towards a more ethical, equitable, attitude in divine conduct, the other contending that the morality of justness has always, as early as Homer, been a dominant element in Greek theological reflection. My suggestion is that things are more complicated than this. There is an abundance of texts, from Homer into the Classical Period and beyond, that stage the two contrastive options of an a-moral arbitrary and a morally inspired just divine intervention as co-existent, sometimes even presented in peaceful contiguity. Quite often the two visions do not even seem to be differentiated in terms of sharp boundaries or explicit intellectually satisfying reconciliations. In other words, the 'logical' tension between the two different views does not seem to have been consistently *experienced* as tension. This picture of a 'luxuriant multiplicity' is best explained as a corollary of an endemic gnomic type of wisdom sayings characterized by an often asyndetic paratactic style. It pervades Greek literature of the Archaic and (early) Classical periods and belongs to the most characteristic traits of Greek theological expression. And it is precisely these testimonies of what *we* experience as contradiction, incongruity, and inconsistency in *e.g.* Homer, Solon, and Herodotus

from which modern hermeneuticians in their 'drive towards coherence' try to save their authors. I hope to show that in doing so they unconsciously claim their author for our modern paradigm and thus alienate him from his own. Recognition of this necessarily involves a reappraisal of the terms in which the dilemma has been conceived in earlier scholarly discussion.

Chapter III. (ONE GOD) discusses mono/henotheistic tendencies with a special focus on the remarkable and—again in our eyes dazzlingly inconsistent yet peaceful—co-existence of the belief in 'one god (who is all)' and the simultaneous continued existence of polytheistic forms of belief and religious practice. For the archaic period the focus is on Xenophanes' theology, for the classical period I examine (again) the notions 'the god' and 'the gods' but this time not on the motives behind their interventions, but on the way they are deemed to *be*: what is the difference between the 'many gods' as a polytheistic sum total of individual deities (as discussed in Ch. I and Appendix I) and the anonymous collective referred to as 'the gods' launched as an instrument for conveying sense to the inexplicable? For the Hellenistic period, finally, the notion of henotheism of gods such as Isis is explored. Throughout this chapter, as in others, strategies well-known from cognitive dissonance theory, as well as the concept of 'complementarity' (two contradictory predicates or qualities can both be experienced as true and valid) will be called in to shed light on the vexed problems concerning the coexistence of the one and the many. One of the conclusions is that there are several different types of oneness.

Chapter IV. (A GOD) opens with a discussion of the sacrificial scene in the beginning of the Homeric *Hymn to Hermes, inter alia* showing the significant cleft yawning between the interpretations of the structuralist (Paris) and the evolutionist/functionalist (Burkert) theories concerned. Next it sets out to devise the image of the god Hermes, arguing that contrary to some modish scholarly ideas gods do have individual identities, personalities, a distinctive description (in the sense of French/Dutch 'signalement'). Even though the literary (Homeric Hymn, the genre of the fable, comedy), visual (herms, vase paintings) and cultic/ritual (typical Hermaic forms of sacrifice) evidence on the god Hermes has received much attention in recent years, it has never been fully realized how revealingly all these different components mirrored, informed and supplemented each other, and thus co-operated in the construction of a recognizable personal image of the god, pervasive and consistent over a long period of time.

Altogether it will be shown that the construction of the god Hermes represents an extreme experiment in ambiguity: it pushes out frontiers in the amalgamation of divine and human traits in a god's nature. Culinary aspects play a major role in the central argument.

Chapter V. (GOD) elaborates upon one of the findings of Chapter IV namely that gods cannot live without a generous dash of (very) human ingredients in their nature, not only in mythical narrative, which thrives on this fact, but also in cult. While 'naturally' gods cannot be expected to consume human food, hence prefer nectar and ambrosia or a sniff of *knise*, no less naturally various types of sacrifices include diverse types of normal human food as eagerly partaken of by gods. Gods, and especially Zeus, are supposed to be all-seeing, yet they do not always see what happens behind their back. Gods are omnipresent, yet they are supposed to live 'right here,' in *this* temple. Ignoring or trivializing these commonplace oscillations between superhuman and human aspects in divine nature entails detrimental consequences.

A ubiquitous scholarly credo—common among all sorts of specialists, but especially popular among 'structuralists'—has it that polytheism by its very nature does not tolerate the idea of divine omnipotence, since each god has his/her own department. Texts that would seem to contradict this article of faith are either ignored or 'disarmed' as rhetorical excrescences. The truth, however, appears to be that a Greek god may alternatively be conceived of as being restricted in his potential, for instance by the limitations of his own specialization, or be acclaimed as being able to do anything he wishes. It all depends on context, perspective, discourse and the rhetorical or poetical flashes of the speaker or author, who can change his stance even within a few lines of a literary passage. This is amply illustrated by an exposé of the miracles of Epidaurian Asklepios, which exemplarily display the two sides of divine capacity: human power (or even powerlessness) versus superhuman omnipotence. Conclusion: Greek gods are omnipotent whenever it suits the interest of the human actor, most conspicuously in the situation of prayer.

Chapter VI. (PLAYING THE GOD) discusses the early stages of the deification of rulers from the fourth century onwards. In Chapters IV and V we have seen gods who are of necessity pictured with human features. In the present chapter it is human beings that claim a share in divine nature. The inevitable clashes between the two contrasting qualities within one (human) being and the strategies to cope with the problems are interpreted in the perspective of theories on ludism

and theatricality. Against modern trends in denying Greeks the notion of belief it is argued that the question "did the Greeks believe in the divinity of their rulers?" is fully justified. However, for an answer we must first reconsider—and where necessary revise—what we so far used to mean by the term 'believe'. In this chapter we will try out concepts such as "willing suspension of disbelief" (Coleridge), "sincere pretence" (Kellendonk), "honest hypocrisy," while paying special attention to Greek ὡς ("as if") in order to open new avenues towards sounding the religious over/undertones of ruler cult. To be sure, interpretations of the religious elements of ruler cult will never exceed the level of suggestion. Even so I hope that within these boundaries this approach will take us a step beyond the at the time revolutionary and still important assessment by Simon Price.

Four sections have been removed from their original setting (two of them from Chapter I, the other two from II and VI, respectively) and have found accommodation in appendices. All of them concern basic relevant issues, but none was immediately necessary for—hence would delay—the progress of the main argument. Moreover, three of them, being exceptions in this book in presenting my personal participation in an ongoing dispute, should better be set apart: readers who dislike critical discussion may ignore them.

Altogether the main themes of this book are, first, that monolithic, one-sided or universalist theories in the field of Greek theology by their very nature tend to be misleading since they illuminate only part of a complex and kaleidoskopic religious reality, which is neither fully transparent/structured nor entirely chaotic. Secondly, it is argued that ancient Greeks particularly in the field of religion or philosophy of life displayed a disquieting capacity to validate two (or more) dissonant, if not contradictory, representations as being complementary rather than mutually exclusive. They not only accept the validity of either one in its own right, but also allow them to co-exist in such a smooth and seemingly unreflected manner that it often shocks the modern mind.

Greeks certainly could acknowledge tensions, problematizing them for instance in tragedy, but surprisingly often they did not or did not in an explicit manner. This position constitutes both their similarity and their difference as compared to the modern reader (without, for that matter, making them "desperately alien", as an all too fashionable expression claims). The modern reader recognizes the seduction of smoothing over logical dissonances (as we learn from theories of cognitive dissonance etc.), but is not able to really live with it, at least

not to the extent of consistently launching it as a strategy for "coping with the gods," as I hope to show the Greeks did.

Some Questions of Method

For the hermeneutic principles that guide my interpretations I refer the reader to the introductory chapter of my *TER UNUS,* which was the first of two volumes under the collective title "Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion." The present book may be seen as the third (and last) volume that rightfully might be subsumed under this collective title.[5]

In that Introduction I devoted a few remarks to the, then novel but soon widely welcomed, 'desperately alien' school, as I will refer to it in the present book. At that moment (1990) I could not foresee its enormous upcoming success, which, because of its relevance to the present book, induces me to briefly return to this issue. The idea goes back as far as Fustel de Coulange, who claimed that "Greece and Rome present themselves to us with an absolutely inimitable character. Nothing in our time resembles them. Nothing in the future will ever resemble them."[6] A century later the idea found a resonance in Paris where Paul Veyne claimed that: "Nothing is farther distanced from us than that ancient civilisation; it is exotic, what do I say, it is abolished."[7] It was the early "École de Paris" led by Jean-Pierre Vernant in particular that stressed the alienness of the Greeks, arguing that they were *others*, that Greek society was *different,* and that the Greek mind, being a product of that society, cannot be used as a mirror in which we view ourselves. Till the present day its partisans never tire of reminding us that the religion of the Greeks was 'other', 'desperately foreign' or 'desperately alien'.[8] The latter expression in particular is scattered lavishly throughout their works.

---

[5] Hence my thanks to Pierre Bonnechère for his kind wish—in his review of Versnel 1993 (*LEC* 64 [1996] 105)—: "Bien que cet ouvrage soit théoriquement le dernier des *Inconsistencies*, espérons qu'Hendrik Versnel nous en dispense une troisième."

[6] N.D. Fustel de Coulanges, *La cité antique* (Paris 1923 = 1864) 4: "La Grèce et Rome se présentent à nous avec un caractère absolument inimitable. Rien dans les temps modernes ne leur ressemble. Rien dans l'avenir ne pourra leur ressembler."

[7] P. Veyne, *L'inventaire des différences* (Paris 1976) 13: "Rien n'est plus loin de nous que cette antique civilisation; elle est exotique, que dis je, elle est abolie."

[8] Bruit-Schmitt 1992, for instance, has this emphatically cumulative expression twice: xvii and 231.

Since Moses Finley, though quite a different type of scholar, held the very same opinion, deploying similar expressions such as "unbridgeable divide," "fundamentally alien," and again "desperately alien,"[9] it will come as no surprise that one of his great admirors, Paul Cartledge, very much stimulated by the French connection, based a monograph with the title *The Greeks: A Portrait of Self and Others*[10] precisely on the concept of 'otherness' as an instrument for definition or self-definition. Once more in this fine book the Greeks are foreign,[11] emphatically and desperately: "For me (…) the ancient Greeks are in crucial respects, ideological no less than institutional, 'desperately foreign'" (p. 5). In his view one of the historian's tasks is even to promote alienation: "one of my aims has been as it were to 'defamiliarize' Classical Greek civilization."[12] Gradually, the reader gets the impression that being desperate about another's otherness is not such a desperate position after all. On the contrary, those swept along in the current boom of *altérité*—and let me confess that I have enthusiastically exploited this notion myself—seem just to love it.

Inevitably however, slogans such as 'desperately alien', by their near ritual repetition—"the new orthodoxy of the foreignness of Greek

---

[9] *Inter alia* in his Foreword to Easterling & Muir 1985. So does, in a different way, S.C. Humphries 2004, who took her point of departure in the works of Finley and Vernant, but since the early eighties sought inspiration in modern anthropology of religion and Foucault. The title of her recent book, "The Strangeness of Gods," expresses her conviction that 'religion' is a modern construct and that we have to go even further than Chr. Sourvinou-Inwood (on whom see Appendix II) in "purifying our readings of Greek culture from modern suppositions." Humphries' main concern is "the problem of inapplicability of modern categories and presuppositions to ancient Greece," especially with respect to religion (p. 3).

[10] Cartledge 1993. The present book was already in the press (January 2011) when I noticed the publication of Eric Gruen, *Retinking the Other in Antiquity* (Princeton 2011) about which Christopher Jones writes: "This is an excellent and timely book on an important topic. Gruen persuasively argues that the model of the Other does not work for antiquity." Hence, I do not expect that the term 'desperately alien' will be prevalent in this book.

[11] He has traced back the origin of the expression to J. W. Jones, *On Aristotle and Greek Tragedy* [London 1962]). At p. 16, on the notion that it is literally impossible to get inside the skin or mind of any other—let alone an 'Other'—society Cartledge writes: "The Greeks, it is argued, were irreducibly alien or desperately foreign to us in culture. In something like the same way that contemporary 'primitive' peoples are alleged to be." It is followed by a passage with warnings against all too rigid exclusivistic oppositions, for which see below.

[12] Both in the beginning (p. 17) and at the end of the book (p. 175).

society" as E. Kearns called it[13]—acquire the precarious status of a dogma if not an axiom. 'Precarious' since the effects tend to become counter-productive. Axioms and dogmas by definition exempt their adherents from the obligation to explain exactly what they mean by them or from reflecting on their advantages and limitations. Innovative, more especially revisionary, theories may be necessary but require just the same critical assessment as did the ancient and worn-out schemes that they claim to replace.[14] Indeed, in the famed words of the astronomer Carl E. Sagan: "It pays to keep an open mind, but not so open that your brains fall out." Or, perhaps more to the point, the mind that adopts a new idea without question, thus turning it into a dogma, may be typified—with a variant of the dreaded notice at Italian churches or museums: 'chiuso per restauro'—as 'closed for innovation'. After all, if a culture is characterized as exotic, desperately alien, absolutely inimitable, separated from us by an unbridgeable divide, the question prompts itself whether it is at all possible to understand or even to describe it on the basis of its literary and material legacy when we have no other interpretive tools besides our own (desperately different) concepts and terminology.[15] How can we reach the unreachable, how find access to the inaccessible?

It is therefore crucial to call to mind an alternative approach. For instance in the other extreme stance of those who consider Greek culture as the earliest form of Western civilization. Which, of course, is exactly the target of the 'desperately aliens'. One might even consider the most generalizing suggestion of Marguérite Yourcenar: "Modern man is a great deal less different than he thinks from man of the 19th, of the 15th century, or of the first century BC or even as compared to man from the stone age."[16] This posture, however sweeping, at least

---

[13] In her review of Gould's contribution to Easterling-Muir 1985, in: *CR* 36 (1986) 259.

[14] "The revisionist biography is becoming as clichéd as the hagiography that originally inspired it," thus the beginning of a review article on biographical work by M. Eliot, *TLS* Sept. 2 (1994) 20.

[15] Oudemans & Lardinois 1987 phrase the difference between Greeks and us in terms of an unbridgeable gap between the modern Western 'separative cosmology', which has no room for ambiguities, and the ancient Greek 'interconnected cosmology'.

[16] "L'homme moderne est bien moins différent qu'il ne le croit de l'homme du XIX^{e} siècle, de l'homme du XV^{e} siècle, de l'homme du Ier siècle avant JésusChrist, ou même de l'homme de l'âge de pierre. Nos besoins et nos instincts sont les mêmes". In an interview with: P. de Rosbo, *Entretiens radiophoniques avec Marguérite Yourcenar* (Paris 1972) 57.

takes into account the absolute minimum precondition for historical and anthropological research, *viz*. "that the most distant cultures, both in space and time, show behaviour that is, to a certain point, meaningful, and understandable as human."[17]

As at several points in this book the positions of Vernant and Burkert will be opposed and compared it may be fitting to present the plea for a basically universal and ongoing identity of the human race as worded by Walter Burkert. Never renouncing his interest in ethology and sociobiology in his search for relics of primordial ritual behaviour in historical Greek cult, Burkert contends: "The conglomerate of tradition which constitutes religion perhaps owes its particular form less to the cunning of reason than to the cunning of biology."[18] In line with this, his book *Creation of the Sacred*[19] opens with a discussion of precisely this distinction between culture and nature in which he takes exception to the monolithical focus on culture, including religion, as the one and only definer of humanity—referring to Cl. Geertz's expression:[20] "there is no nature apart from culture"—and the concomitant dominant interest in differentiation instead of unity in human expression. While acknowledging Vernant's important contributions from the viewpoint of religion as a cultural marker of the polis, Burkert claims that we should not ignore the phenomena common to all human civilizations, the universalia of anthropology. Among them are language, art and religion, which accordingly may be viewed as a "long-lived hybrid between the cultural and the biological traditions."[21] Instead of the notion of Greeks as *cultural others* we are here confronted with the concept of Greeks as *natural humans*, like us. Instead of a professed strategy to 'defamiliarize' Greek culture, we discern a quest for human universals. Instead of 'desperately alien', Greeks and moderns are all recognizable links—hence commensurable components—in the great chain of human evolution.

Confronted with this never-ending dispute, in which one will recognize the vexed complications of the 'anthropological doubt', I confess

---

[17] Oudemans and Lardinois 1987, 7.
[18] Burkert 1985, 218.
[19] Burkert 1996, 2–4.
[20] Cl. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York 1973), 35.
[21] p. 20. This means that (p. 19): "religion, like language, can be hypothetized to have arisen at a certain stage in prehistory as a competitive act, as a way of gaining an advantage over those who did not take part in it." Cf. 23–33 for the close connections between language and religion.

that I do not see a workable alternative to the no-nonsense conclusion as phrased by Dilthey:

> Interpretation would be *impossible* if expressions of life were completely strange. It would be *unnecessary* if nothing strange were in them. It lies, therefore, between these two extremes.[22]

And I am not alone in this.[23] Curiously, many a propagandist of 'desperate otherness', as if acknowledging the inevitability of the Diltheyan conclusion, grudgingly admits as much. So does for instance Cartledge: "On the other hand, there are or should be limits to the 'othering' of the Greeks" (p. 6); "although Classical Greek culture is both as a whole and in fundamental details deeply alien, it is nevertheless possible for us to gain a sympathetic understanding of Greek culture" (p. 17 and cf. p. 176). *And* so does, most surprisingly (and to my knowledge once only), Vernant:

> The works ancient Greece created are different enough from that of our mental universe to give us a sense of disorientation from ourselves.

---

[22] W. Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften* 7 (Göttingen 1979) 225: "Die Auslegung wäre unmöglich, wenn die Lebensaüßerungen gänzlich fremd wären. Sie wären unnötig, wenn ihnen nichts fremd wäre. Zwischen diesen beiden aüßersten Gegensätzen liegt sie also." As quoted by J.Z. Smith 1982, 135 n. 2, and brilliantly exploited there and in his other works. Cf. Geertz 1973, 41, "Once one abandons uniformitarianism (….) relativism is a genuine danger; but it can be warded off only by facing directly and fully the diversities of human culture (…) and embracing them within the body of one's concept of man, not by gliding past them with vague tautologies and forceless banalities." Oudemans & Lardinois 1987, 4–10 provide an excellent discussion of the problem. For fundamental views on the background and the implications of the 'anthropological doubt' see: R. Horton & R. Finnegan, *Modes of Thought. Essays on Thinking in Western and non-Western Societies* (London 1973); B.R. Wilson, *Rationality* (Oxford 1970, 1974[2]); H.G. Kippenberg, Einleitung: Zur Kontroverse über das Verstehen fremden Denkens, in: H.G. Kippenberg & B. Luchesi (edd.), *Die Sozialwissenschaftliche Kontroverse über das Verstehen fremden Denkens* (Frankfurt 1978) 9–51.

[23] To mention one out of many, F. Jameson, Marxism and Historicism, *The Ideologies of Theory*, 2 (1988) 148–77, argues that our understanding of history is always dialectic, oscillating between Identity and Difference: "If we choose to affirm the Identity of the alien object with ourselves—if we decide that it is more or less directly or intuitively accessible to us—then we have presupposed what was to have been demonstrated, and our apparent 'comprehension' of these alien texts must be haunted by the nagging suspicion that we have all the while remained locked in our own present. (…..) Yet if we decide to reverse this initial stance, and to affirm the radical Difference of the alien object from ourselves, then at once the doors of comprehension begin to swing closed and we find ourselves separated by the whole density of our own culture from objects or cultures thus initially defined as Other from ourselves and thus as irremediably inaccessible."

> (….) At the same time, they are not as foreign to us as others are, since they are still living in our cultural tradition to which we continue to remain attached. Remote enough from us to study him as an object and as any other object to which our modern psychological categories do not entirely apply, Greek man is nevertheless close enough for us to be able, without too many obstacles, to enter into communication with him.[24]

All this considerably differs from the isolated mantras that we have been discussing. And here we approach the rationale of this excursus: I hope it shows that axiomatic proclamations such as 'desperately alien' without further context or specification are desperately unscholarly, senseless, useless, and counterproductive testimonies of what Geertz (above n. 17) labelled "forceless banalities." Banal too, but far less detrimental, is the alternative proposed by Dilthey (and implied in the pronouncements of Cartledge and Vernant just quoted) that Greeks are both different from and similar to the modern reader. The only way to make this banality interesting is by asking in what respects, to which degree, under which circumstances, and how distinctively Greeks, and above all *which* Greeks conceived their world in ways different from or similar to those of us moderns. This, then, is another major aim of this book, in which I will argue that it is good to defamiliarize the ancient Greeks, but not to the degree of dehumanizing them.

This implies, by way of example, that I both appreciate *and* have my doubts concerning the following statement by Cartledge 1983, 98: "few aspects of antiquity are harder to comprehend than the mental universe of paganism, a universe inhabited by and full of a multiplicity of gods rather than governed by one omnipotent deity." In this book I hope to show that in some respects it no doubt is, but that there is reason to question the universality of this statement. Investigating problems inherent in such issues as polytheism/monotheism, theodicy and divine omnipotence (Chs. I/III, II, V respectively) we will discover that ancient Greeks applied interpretive strategies that did not substantially differ from the ones launched by modern Christians. As far as they do differ they do not differ *desperately*. The difference between Greeks and moderns is not to be sought in the *variety* of theological solutions (some of which Greeks and moderns share) but in their ability to accept (in our eyes) incompatible ideas as both/all true and simultaneously available. Consequently, the suggestion that

[24] Vernant 1971, 6, as translated by Zeitlin 1991, 7.

"the government of one omnipotent god" should be relatively more transparent than a regime of many gods is at least open to discussion. Even the most superficial acquaintance with the recent debate among Christian theologians on the notions of monotheism, theodicy, and omnipotence suffices to elucidate that things are just a bit more complicated than that.

Generally, it is hard to avoid the impression that we often exploit our classical texts as tools to show how clever *we* are in interpreting them, meanwhile imposing *our* interpretive paradigm on *their* expressions, and thus paving our road towards the professorate (if not the Sather professorate). It would not be a bad idea at all if for once we would read their texts in what currently seems to be felt as a wayward manner, for example in order to see how *they* coped with questions that our paradigm still does not allow us to solve. Indeed it is during the years of writing this book that I gradually learned to appreciate Nietzsche's words: "Only late does it dawn on one what we can have from the Greeks, only after we have learnt much and pondered much."[25]

In Aesop's 60th fable a satyr gives up his friendship with a man who first blew on his hands to make them warm and later blew on his bites of food in order to make them cool. A person who blows hot and cool with the same mouth, he admitted, was just a bridge too far for him. The prosaic message as usual added in the envoy to the fable says: "We conclude that we should shun friendship with those whose character is ambiguous." Now these envoys are specialized in missing the point, as it most flagrantly does here. I can only hope the reader of this book won't. In the forthcoming chapters I will never stop blowing hot and cool from the same mouth, but not on the same objects and not in the same circumstances. That is what the satyr missed by making his false generalization. That is what I often noticed as a modern pitfall particularly alluring to those who have some difficulty in appreciating ambiguous positions, ancient or modern.

---

[25] F. Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente* (Sämtliche Werke 8, Berlin/New York 1980) 25. I am not referring to the way in which 'learning from the Classics' is approached in: B. Goff (ed.), *Classics and Colonialism* (London 2005), however interesting its theme may be. Quite differently but equally challenging: P. Jones, *Vote for Caesar: How the Ancient Greeks and Romans Solved the Problems of Today* (2008). A. Chaniotis, A. Kuhn & Chr. Kuhn (edd.). *Applied classics: comparisons, constructs, controversies* (Stuttgart 2009) provides interesting critical discussions of related issues.

Finally, I am sure that many a specialist in any of the six topics treated in this book will find much to disagree with. I hope, however, that the great variety of topics will make it practically impossible for one scholar to disagree with all of them. But how about the author himself? Does he believe in the truth of everything he has written? My answer is that definitive truth being unattainable, in the end it may turn out to be a matter of trust rather than of truth or, to paraphrase a statement of an anthropologist, a matter of hoping to be "the one that has produced the more persuasive fiction."[26] During the process of thinking, arguing and writing, however, the author is bound to 'do as if' he believes in (the results of) what he is doing. If this may sometimes make him phrase his insights in a rather unqualified way, please read the excursus on 'Augensblicksglauben' in Ch. VI before passing judgement. In the end, however, any author—particularly the one who does not have the opportunity to comply with George Orwell's advice "Never mention religion if you can possibly avoid it"—may find his greatest comfort in a brilliant quote of T.S. Eliot.[27]

> About anything so great as ancient Greek religion it is probable that we can never be right; and if we can never be right, it is better that we should from time to time change our way of being wrong.

Some Apologetic Technicalities

On footnoting

The long period of the book's genesis had its consequences for its format and girth, particularly with regard to the footnotes. As this will be my last book of such size I take the opportunity to spend a few words on the issue of footnotes. Few reviews of my earlier books failed to refer to their number, length, and exhaustiveness. Even if packed in the rose cellophane of respect a touch of reservation could not always escape their author. Although I am fully ready to offer my apologies for any irritation caused, I have no understanding of it.

In a review of a recent book of a compatriot of mine, whose craving for footnotes is one of the few things we share, the critic frontally

---

[26] M. Strathern, Out of Context: The Persuasive Fictions of Anthropology, *CA* 28 (1987) 251–81.

[27] *Selected Essays* p. 107, where he is speaking on Shakespeare. I have replaced the word "Shakespeare" with another to create relevance to our issue.

censures the "too-abundant notes as an unpleasant feature", giving a few deterring examples. In his view "a footnote should lead the reader to a source worth exploring, or verify a point of contention." And he explains the author's aberrant preference for the footnote: "But the author writes in a European tradition that admires such behavior." In the 'Translator's Introduction' to Bruit-Schmitt 1992, p. XIV, Paul Cartledge (dis)qualifies Burkert's great handbook of 1985 as being: "more a book of reference than an interpretative monograph. Not that it does not contain interpretation, throughout, but its many learned theses tend to be obscured by the overlay of erudition documented in the 130 pages of endnotes."

Such critical assessments baffle me. How *can* notes, more particularly *end*notes, obscure the main text? And what about "a European tradition" as proposed by the first reviewer? Did he ever cast a glance into the early scriptures of the 'Paris school'? I well remember that at least one of my incentives to give rather free rein to the footnote was the shocking observation of the dearth of them—and the near total lack of references to non-French literature—in these French works. For other conceivable motives, some of which I recognize, I refer the reader to the highly amusing studies of Steve Nimis and Antony Grafton.[28] "Giving an intellectual context for one's argument, referring the reader to further or contrary discussions on the subject, giving credit to predecessors" strikes me as a suitable generic summary of the major functions of the footnote, especially since it leaves the author sufficient room for his own interpretation of these options. Relevancy moreover is a highly individual concept. However, imposing restrictive directives on what a footnote should/must/ought to offer is in my view a pedantic hobby.

I am quite aware that all this does not suffice as an apology in the eyes of scholars who do not like footnotes. For them, however, I have

[28] St. Nimis, Fussnoten: Das Fundament der Wissenschaft, *Arethusa* 17 (1984) 105–134 (in English despite its title); A. Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (London 1997). At the moment of writing the discovery was published that the number of references *to* a book is directly proportionate to the number of references *in* that book (Conference of the Society for the Psychology of Science and Technology, Berkeley August 7th 2010). Would have been a perfect motive had I known it. One perfectly legitimate motive is that notes are indispensable locations for accommodating quotations in any other than the Anglo-saxon language.

an, apparently so far unsuspected, way out of the problem: one need not read them (all)![29]

On quoting

"Versnel likes to quote" writes one reviewer and this was not intended as a compliment. But right he was. Not being a native speaker in any of the great world languages, I intensely hate every moment of being obliged to write in one of them instead of in my own (to get just an impression of my feelings, please, reader, try to tackle the motto above this Introduction). Hence, I am so relieved to find an author, belonging to whatever domain of scholarship, art, or literature, who formulates an idea that I am wrestling with more elegantly than I ever could, that I cannot withstand quoting it. It serves clarification. And once more I simply do not understand what can be wrong with that. Here, however, I feel backed up by Professor Sterling Dow in his charming little book "*Fifty Years of Sathers* (Berkeley etc. 1965) 55. There he notices with satisfaction that some earlier lecturers were "well-read" authors, enriching their pages with quotations from the 'great literature' of the Western World. But since "scholars, alas, have very little time to read widely," as he writes, the more recent volumes have no such "literary" flavor.[30]

So, as this introduction makes sufficiently clear, I keep quoting, mostly from scholarly literature of course, also and especially so in foot-notes, where relevant passages in other works are often quoted in full, to spare the reader that reads footnotes the effort of looking them up themselves. And let us be frank: who, except those readers who knew it already, would not have regretted to miss the quotation from T.S. Eliot?

---

[29] But please do read the present one which proves that I am not blind to criticism. A reviewer of Versnel 1993, noted that at a passage on Greek-eating Cyclopes I had regaled "the stunned, occasionally surfeited" reader on "a bibliography on cannibalism"! I did so because I thought cannibals are *interesting*, especially since the question whether Polyphemus merits this predicate is a matter of discussion. In the journal *Nature* of August 2010, one can read that new findings *may* indicate that already the Australopithecanthropus used sharp stones to carve flesh from the bones of a beast of prey. I considered adding a footnote on this interesting news to illuminate a passage on the Homeric 'lapse' in using the verb 'to cut' for the Cyclops at his cannibalistic meal (below p. 386). By way of concession I have refrained from doing this and have thus withheld an extremely interesting piece of information from the interested reader. I regret this.

[30] Admittedly adding the afterthought: "There is also the danger, very real, that a favorite quotation is brought in self-consciously, for its own sake, or to parade knowledge."

On Desexualizing Language

I have never come across a satisfactory attempt to avoid 'sexist' language in the use of personal pronouns. *Consistently* applying plurals in order to avoid the problem, burdening the text with "he or she"'s, or following Dover (in the preface of his *Frogs*) in introducing gender-neutral forms like 'hrs' and 'hrm,' all these solutions are less than elegant. In this book I have occasionally resorted to alternating 'she/her' and 'he/him' in one passage. Although this may come in handy in some occasions (e.g. Ch. V, first paragraph) elsewhere it may breed feelings of uneasiness as I hope the first paragraph of this Introduction may have done. So, from time to time in this book the person indicated with 'he' should be taken as androgynous.

Postscriptum

As said above this book is based on the Sather Lectures of 1999. Sather professors are invited to sign an agreement implying that the book shall be published in the series 'Sather Classical Lectures' of California University Press. Unfortunately (or fortunately), the contract was not reciprocal. Despite the strong recommendation of the referee and with great regret the publisher had to inform me that, due to recent regulations, *inter alia* under influence of the present crisis, the press can no longer afford to publish volumes of the size of the present book. This, now, turned out to be a blessing in disguise. However much I would have liked to see the book published in the distinguished Sather series, I cannot deny my long-time secret preference for accommodating it in another distinguished series. Therefore I am deeply grateful to Brill Academic Publishers and the editorial board of 'Religions in the Graeco-Roman World' (RGRW) for kindly accepting the book for their prestigious series.

It is this year fifty years ago that the first volume of Vermaseren's 'Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain' (EPRO)—of which RGRW is the sequel—appeared. In the fact that this book will be presented on the day on which we will commemorate this anniversary, the day, too, of my farewell to our series, I see the hand of destiny. And as Herodotus taught us: τὴν πεπρωμένην μοῖραν ἀδύνατά ἐστι ἀποφυγεῖν καὶ θεῷ.

CHAPTER ONE

MANY GODS
COMPLICATIONS OF POLYTHEISM

Gods, gods, there are so many there's no place left for a foot.
Basavanna

1. Order versus Chaos

Worn out by hardship, having drifted ashore after two nights and two days in the seething waves of a stormy sea, Odysseus is hungry. In his distress he addresses the first—and only—girl that meets his eyes with, as Homer *Od.* 6.149–153 reports, the gentle and cunning words: "Are you a goddess or a mortal woman? If a goddess, it is of Artemis that your form, stature, and figure (εἶδός τε μέγεθός τε φυήν) most remind me." Not an unseasonable exordium under the circumstances. When, some 1300 years after this event, the inhabitants of the city of Lystra in the region of Lycaonia (Asia Minor) witnessed the apostles Paul and Barnabas preaching and working miracles, they took them to be gods in the likeness of men.[1] Hungry too, or so they thought. So the priest of 'Zeus who is before the city' supplied oxen in order to bring a sacrifice in honour of their divine visitors,[2] christening Barnabas Zeus and Paul Hermes because the latter "was the principal speaker," as we read in the Acts of the Apostles.

Hungry gods and deified mortals, as well as the interaction between rhetorical praise and religious language belong to the most captivating phenomena of Greek religion. They will all return in later chapters of this book. The present chapter will be concerned with another theme prompted by these two charming anecdotes, namely that of

---

[1] Acts 14.11: "The gods, having taken on human shape, have come down to us."

[2] Acts 14.13 mentions only θύειν, while 14.19 has θύειν αὐτοῖς (to sacrifice *to* them). The expression πρὸ τῆς πόλεως as an epithet of gods may refer to their protective nature, but more often to the location of their sanctuary outside the city, as for instance the one of 'Dionysos before the city' of Ephesos, on which see: R. Merkelbach, Die ephesischen Dionysosmysten vor der Stadt, *ZPE* 36 (1979) 151–156.

polytheism. Not that Greeks of the archaic and classical periods used that term to typify their own religion. It is a qualification—or rather a disqualification—invented by Christian monotheists in order to give expression to a conceptual antithesis.[3] Their polytheistic opponents, in their turn, stigmatized the Christians as *atheoi*, not as *monotheoi.*

Though lacking appropriate conceptual terminology, the Greeks were very much aware that they worshipped a multitude of gods. Indeed, in the words of a modern observer, ancient Greek religion was 'unashamedly polytheistic',[4] to both the awe and the distress of the mortal observers,[5] ancient and modern. Homer *Il.* 20.4–9 describes how an infinite number of gods come to the assembly on Olympos, including all the rivers and all the nymphs. From a different perspective, Thales (early sixth century BC) claimed that "everything is full of gods"[6] and, again in another context, his older contemporary Hesiod *Op*. 252 f. claims that no fewer than 30.000 (probably meaning 'thrice countless', which is *very* many indeed) divine assistants of Zeus are

[3] "Le mot 'polythéisme' a été inventé par des monothéistes:" Rudhardt 1966, 355; "Von dem Sonderfall der israelitischen Religion aus gesehen, wird (viz. in Philo) der 'Normalfall' (viz. polytheistic religion) terminologisch ausgegrenzt—und nicht umgekehrt:" Gladigow 1983, 293. Cf. Bruit-Schmitt 1992, 176. The term πολύθεος did occur and can be found already in Aesch. *Suppl.* 424, describing one altar that is shared by a plurality of gods. It was rediscovered for European tradition by Jean Bodin in 1580. See: F. Schmidt, Naissance des polythéismes (1624–1757), *ASSR* 59 (1985) 77–90, espec. 77 and 88 n. 2. On the modern construction of the two notions polytheism-monotheism and their opposition see: R. Hülsewiesche & S. Loretz, Polytheismus I, *HWP* 7 (1989) 1087–1093; B. Gladigow, Polytheismus. Akzente, Perspektiven und Optionen der Forschung, *Zeitschrift f. Religionswissenschaft* 5 (1997) 59–77; *idem*, Polytheismus, *Metzler Lexikon Religion* 3 (2000) 38–43; *idem*, 2002; Ahn 2003, and below Ch. III p. 243. I use the term polytheism in its accepted and non-dogmatic designation of 'belief in and worship of many gods'.

[4] Rowe 1980, 51. I gladly adopt this fortunate expression, especially because there also exists an 'ashamed' type of polytheism, namely in those monotheistic systems that cannot resist the emergence of a plurality of divine persons. See below p. 241 ff.

[5] "Gods overflowed like clothes from an over-filled drawer which no one felt obliged to tidy," thus one of the many pertinent statements in: Parker 2005, 387. So many gods are not easy to memorize either. Papyri have produced quite a number of lists of gods intended as school exercises: *P. Mich*. I 656, 657 (H.C. Youtie, *Scriptiunculae* I [Amsterdam 1973] 467–477); O. Guéraud & P. Jouquet, Publ. Soc. Fouad II, *Un livre d'écolier du III^e siècle avant J.-C.*; N.E. Priest, A list of Gods, *ZPE* 27 (1977) 194–200 (on bilingualism). Cf. also G. Goetz (ed.), *Corpus Glossariorum Latinorum* III: *Hermeneumata Pseudodositheana* (Leipzig 1892).

[6] Or does this go back to Xenophanes? For which see: A.V. Lebedev, A New Fragment of Xenophanes, in: M. Capaso *et alii* (edd.), *Studi di filosofia preplatonica* (Naples 1985) 13 ff.; G. Cerri, Il frammento Lebedev di Senofane (fr. dub 47 Gent.-Pr.), *QUCC* 69 (2001) 25–34.

watching over judgments and evil deeds.[7] He is rapped over the knuckles, more than a millennium later, by Prudentius *Apophthegmata* 453, who knew better and scorned Julian the Apostate for worshipping three hundred thousand gods (*amans ter centum milia divum*).[8]

Albeit not without exaggeration these expressions are nonetheless indicative of the way Greeks envisaged their polytheistic cosmology. And, indeed, the Greek appreciation of this divine plurality was not devoid of ambiguity. One complication was of a quite practical nature: the speech *Against Nikomachos* in the corpus of Lyias, claims that Nikomachos, charged with the job of collecting and inscribing the sacred laws of Athens, had worked out such a long list of sacrifices that the city would go bankrupt if it kept to the code.[9]

A far more burning issue inherent in plurality, as Odysseus and the Lycaonians illustrate, is that of choice, in other words the quest for divine identities. A corollary of this, no less exasperating, is the question of order versus chaos. Humans—and I take this category as including both ancient Greeks and modern scholars—generally dislike uncertainty and doubt.[10] While early Christians disqualified pagans by stressing the disorderly and confusing plurality of their divine

---

[7] The same number is mentioned centuries later by the Cynic Oinomaos *apud* Euseb. *Praep. ev.* 5.36.2, with reference to the total number of idols in his time. Admittedly this regards collectives of anonymous gods. As far as named gods are concerned, I doubt if the Greek pantheon can boast as many different deities as the Akkadian one, where A. Deimel, *Pantheon Babylonicum* (Rome 1914) counts 3300, and K. Tallquist, *Akkadische Götterepitheta* (Helsinki 1938) 2400 divine names. And compare the grand total of 1218 gods in one inscription and 1970 divine names in AN=anum as discussed by B. Nevling Porter, The Anxiety of Multiplicity, in: Porter 2000, 211–271.

[8] As E. Bickerman noticed in *AJPh* 95 (1974) 369 n. 31, who also refers to an observation by Petronius that the city of Cumae had more immortal than mortal inhabitants: *idem*, Anonymous Gods, *JWI* 1 (1937–8) 187. On Neoplatonist and Christian scorn of Julian's numerous sacrificial activities see: N. Belayche, Sacrifice and Theory of Sacrifice During the 'Pagan Reaction': Julian the Emperor, in: A.I. Baumgarten (ed.), *Sacrifice in Religious Experience* (Leiden 2002), 101–126. Cf. also Aug. *CD* 4.25.177, *strepitus innumerabilium daemoniorum*.

[9] Lys. *Or.* 30, 27–30. See Burkert 1985, 226; 1996, 142. Rosivach 1994, 9–67, however, calculates that there must have been forty to forty five public sacrifices every year in fourth century Athens. Since L. Deubner, *Attische Feste* (Berlin 1932), there is a more recent collection of all the (dated) festivals in the Athenian calendar: J.D. Mikalson, *The Sacred and Civil Calendar of the Athenian Year* (Princeton 1975). Cf. also: R.C.T. Parker, Festivals of the Attic Demes, in: T. Linders-Nordquist 1987, 137–147; *idem* 2005, Appendix I. Attic Festivals: A Checklist, pp. 456–487 (very useful).

[10] I have discussed this fundamental characteristic of human culture and its various strategies to cope with the inherent problems (e.g. cognitive dissonance) in the Introduction to Versnel 1990.

cosmology, modern scholarship has launched a great variety of rescue operations in order to save our Greeks for our orderly paradigm by vindicating an underlying unity in their divine diversity. We will pay attention to one of these strategies—the hunt for oneness among the many—in the third chapter. Another escape is to stress the element of structure and coherence in the Greek pantheon as opposed to the chaos that the notion of plurality inevitably evokes in the perception of readers imbued with a monotheistic heritage. This, then, is the topic that we will broach in the present first chapter, for it was at stake in the most influential central debate of the second half of the last century.

1. *The Greek pantheon: kosmos or chaos?*

With 'most influential central debate' I am referring to the clash between the two outstanding champions in the study of Greek religion of the last forty years. One is Walter Burkert, widely acclaimed as the greatest living expert on Greek religion. The other is Jean-Pierre Vernant, initiator, indefatigable patron, and till his death in 2007 the *eminence grise* of what is generally referred to as the *École de Paris*. His introduction, in the sixties, of a structuralistic approach to the study of Greek religion—later he preferred the catchword 'psychologie historique'—has hit the field like an earthquake, generating the fathomless chasms that separate the initiated within from the unbelievers without. All students of Greek religion stand in debt of at least one of these two protagonists, many—including the present writer—of both.[11]

---

[11] This section of the present chapter had reached its final form years before I actually gave the Sather lectures in 1999, and I have not changed its overall shape and content since. Many assessments of the Parisian structuralist approach (for the expression 'école de Paris' see below n. 41) in comparison with a more traditionalist approach have appeared since, for none of which I feel more sympathy than the one by Parker 2005, 387–395, being brief, crisp, and clever in that it inconspicuously calls in question in the next line any judgement made in the preceding one (a characteristic that I saw recently phrased in a more elegant way by V. Pirenne-Delforge in her review of Parker's book in *Kernos* 20 (2007) 428. While the reader will have to wait for my own considerations till the end of this chapter, I warmly recommend reading Parker's exposition. In the meantime it may be appropriate at this point to express my approval of E.W. Ardener, Social Anthropology and the Decline of Modernism, in: J. Overing (ed.), *Reason and Morality* (London 1985), who argues that although other disciplines may think of structuralism as postmodern, its place in anthropology is as a thoroughly modernist phenomenon. So does in other words C. Geertz, *Works and Lives. The Anthropologist as Author* (Stanford 1988) 143, when he speaks of the "Lévi-Straussian rage for order."

With respect to the appreciation of Greek polytheism, one could not possibly find two scholars more appropriate to illustrate the amazing cleft between modern positions than Burkert and Vernant. For this reason as well as—in the most honest sense of the word—*honoris causa* I will now start our exposé of the implications and complications of polytheism with two quotations taken from the work of these eminent students of Greek religion.

In his Inaugural Lecture to the Chair of Comparative Studies of Ancient Religions at the Collège de France, December the 5th 1975,[12] speaking about Greek polytheism, Vernant formulated what I would call both his confession of faith and the guiding principle for the major part of his scholarly work.[13] Several items of the following definition will merit our attention in later lectures.

> A god is a power that represents a type of action, a kind of force. Within the framework of a pantheon, each of these powers is defined*[14] not in itself as an isolated object but by virtue of its relative position in the aggregate of forces, by the structure of relations that oppose and unite it to the other powers that constitute the divine universe. The law of this

[12] It appeared as a separate publication as *Religion grecque, religions antiques,* in the series Textes à l'appui (Maspéro Paris 1976), whose pagination I follow for the French quotations, and also as an article under the title "Grèce ancienne et étude comparé des religions" in *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 41 (1976) 5–24. The English translation, 'Inaugural Address at the Collège de France', appeared in *Social Science Information* 16 (1977) 5–24, which was reproduced in: *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*, edited with an excellent introduction by Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton 1991), 269–289, whose pagination I follow for the English quotations.

[13] Hence similar enunciations return time and again, e.g. in Vernant 1980, IX: "Our remarks on the Greek gods consider the pantheon from two points of view; first as a divine society with its own hierarchy, in which each god enjoys his own particular attributes and privileges, bearing a more or less close, more or less direct relation to the structure of human society; and secondly as a classificatory system, a symbolic language with its own intellectual ends." See *ibidem* the chapter 'The Society of the Gods', 92–109, espec. 106. These programmatic theoremata are adopted as a catechism of sorts by many adherents and sympathisers as for instance Detienne 1986, 50: "Un dieu ne saurait se définir en termes statiques, mais à travers l'ensemble des positions qu'il peut occuper;" Bruit-Schmitt 1992, 176 ff. and 277 f.

[14] I have indicated with an * the cases where I propose a translation differing from the original one by H. Piat: "being defined" instead of "becomes distinct;" "demarcation" instead of "definition;" "omnipotence" instead of "all-powerful;" "infinite power" instead of "the infinite." The reader may compare the French original (below n. 16) to understand why. As Paul Cartledge sighs in his preface to Bruit-Schmitt 1992, the jargon of the Paris school ("*penser* le divin") is sometimes untranslatable. Some of these problems emerge in the present—most seminal—passage.

> society of the beyond is the strict demarcation* of the forces[15] and their hierarchical counterbalancing. This excludes the categories of omnipotence*, omniscience and of infinite power.*[16]

As to the question of how he can be so confident of all this,[17] the answer can be found at the preceding page of the same treatise (271 f.). It is another confession of faith, pertaining to the profusion and diversity of myths, including their contradictions and disparities, which—as Vernant sees it—debarred previous scholars from treating them as a coherent system.

> A scattered and heterogeneous pantheon, a mythology of bits and pieces: if this was the polytheism of the Greeks, how could these men, whose exacting rigor in the realms of intellectual consistency is extolled, have lived their religious life in a kind of chaos?[18]

This (rhetorical) question may, and often did come as a surprise to those who have cognizance, if only by the title, of Dodds' famous book 'The Greeks and the *Ir*rational'. Vernant has amply elaborated on the theme of the consistency of Greek theology in his analyses of structural relations and oppositions between gods, most notably in his

---

[15] It should be added that these forces, rather than by spheres of activity, are distinguished by modes of action, each of which in turn may be ascribed to any god. E.g. though most characteristic of Athena, *metis* ('cunning') in various different ways belongs to the equipment of many other gods.

[16] French original (p. 15): "Un dieu est une puissance qui traduit une forme d'action, un type de pouvoir. Dans le cadre d'un panthéon, chacune de ces puissances se définit, non en elle même, comme sujèt isolé, mais par sa position relative dans l'ensemble des pouvoirs, par le système des rapports qui l'opposent et l'unissent aux autres puissances composant l'univers divin. La loi de cette société de l'au-delà, c'est la délimitation stricte des pouvoirs, leur équilibre hiérarchisé, ce qui exclut les catégories de la toute-puissance, de l'omniscience, du pouvoir infini."

[17] Several components of this definition can be found in works by earlier scholars. Very similar for example is A. Brelich, Der Polytheismus, *Numen* 7 (1960) 123–136, espec. 128: "Darüber hinaus müssen die Gottheiten voneinander gut abgehoben werden; doch, um eine Störung der Einheit der Erfahrungswelt zu vermeiden, müssen die Gottheiten miteinander verbunden werden und ein organisches Pantheon bilden." and 129: "die Vielfältigkeit von Aspekten, die Differenzierung von anderen Gottheiten und die durch Beziehungen zu anderen Gottheiten bedingte Einfügung in ein Pantheon."

[18] In the French original (p. 12/3): "Un panthéon dispersé, disparate, une mythologie faite de pièces et de morceaux, si tel était le polythéisme des Grecs, comment ces hommes, dont on célèbre l'exigente rigueur en matière de cohérence intellectuelle, ont-ils pu vivre religieusement dans une sorte de chaos?" Cf. Vernant 1980, 214: "that the same people, the same civilisation held to be the embodiment of virtues of intellectual clarity, rigour and order could have lived in a sort of chaos where their religion and mythology were concerned."

brilliant discussion of Hermes and Hestia,[19] while Detienne followed suit with, for instance, his analysis of Athena and Poseidon.[20] Both types of relationship—similarity and opposition—embody contrary but complementary aspects of the Greeks' experience of space and social relations. It is also true, however, as has been often noticed, that in numerous cases gods seem to duck out of the system or are forced into it.[21] We will return to this in later chapters. All the same, Vernant never renounced his conviction that "the polytheistic system is a *rigorously logical* ensemble, designed for the purpose of classifying divine capacities and powers" (my italics). 'Pantheon', 'system', 'structure': the terminology itself suggests coherence, correlation, transparency.[22] If we were asked to summarize Vernant's views on the Greek pantheon in one word, the term 'structure' (or Greek *kosmos*) would be a good candidate.

In *his* 'confession of faith', to be found in *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche*, published two years after Vernant's inaugural address, in 1977, Walter Burkert presents his assessment of Greek polytheism:[23]

---

[19] Vernant, 1971. 'Brilliant' does not imply that there is nothing to criticise, for which see Ch. IV.

[20] M. Detienne, La corneille de mer, in: M. Detienne & J.-P. Vernant, *Les ruses de l'intelligence. La mètis des Grecs* (Paris 1974) 203–243. English translation in: *idem*, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society* (Hassocks, Sussex 1974) 215–258; 'The Sea-Crow', in: Gordon 1981, 16–42. And cf. his analyses of oppositions and similarities between Athena and Hephaistos, *ibid.* 169–260.

[21] So let me hasten to add that the Greek pantheon as viewed by the Paris team, though conceived as "a system of classification, a particular way of ordering and conceptualising the universe" (Vernant 1980, 94), never was a "static system of polarities," but consisted of "overlapping sets of dynamic interrelations, complex transformations and shifting tensions, viewed in the context of history, social institutions, ritual and political life:" thus C.P. Segal, Afterword: J.-P. Vernant and the Study of Ancient Greece, *Arethusa* 15 (1982) 221–234, espec. 232.

[22] It should be noted in passing, that, like polytheism, the term 'pantheon' was definitely not a fixed notion in Greek religious idiom, least of all in our sense of 'divine society'. On the contrary, whenever Greeks introduced collective notions such as *pantes theoi*, these refer to lack of contours rather than to an organic and transparent system, as we shall see below.

[23] I quote from the English version, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical* (translated by J. Raffan, Oxford 1985) 119. The German original runs: "Nun ist jedoch eine polytheistische Götterwelt nicht nur für den Aussenstehenden potentiell chaotisch. Die Individualität eines Gottes, durch die er von anderen sich unterscheidet, wird durch mindestens viererlei constituiert und vermittelt: den nach Ort und Zeit fixierten Kult mit seinem Ritualprogramm und der darüber liegenden Stimmung; den Namen; die über den so benannten erzählten Mythen; die Ikonographie, insbesondere

> But a polytheistic world of gods is nevertheless potentially chaotic, and not only for the outsider. The distinctive personality of a god is constituted and mediated by at least four different factors: the established local cult with its ritual programme and unique atmosphere, the divine name, the myths told about the named being, and the iconography, especially the cult image. All the same, this complex is easily dissolved, and this makes it quite impossible to write the history of any single god.[24]

Clearly, this picture fits perfectly Vernant's derisive evocation of "a scattered and heterogeneous pantheon," in short, a *chaos*. Here, then, we encounter two radically different and on the face of it incompatible views of Greek polytheism, differing in practically every respect, both as to content and type of argumentation, most conspicuously in the antithesis between what I have called *kosmos* and *chaos*.

Significantly, the only conviction which the two scholars do share, namely the idea that it is impossible to adequately define one single god in isolation from others, precisely reveals the gulf by which they are separated. Vernant explains this *aporia* by his conviction that no god exists (hence: can be described) in isolation from other gods. Together the gods construct, as we have seen, "the polytheistic system as a rigorously logical ensemble, designed for the purpose of classifying divine capacities and powers." Burkert, in his definition, avoids these terms, and gives a radically different reason for *his* inability of fully describing one god in isolation: each god as an individual is defined by a number of characteristics, dependent on variations in time and place. These characteristics, however, are variables associated in untransparent and seemingly arbitrary shifts with a great number of other gods. While for Vernant the coexistence and relationships of gods are the *conditio sine qua non* for an individuation of each god, for Burkert the very same pluralist variety of gods and their transformations constitute the germs of the potentially chaotic nature of Greek polytheism.

Both scholars, of course, are very much aware of and have from time to time alluded to their differences of opinion. When Vernant asserts that "it is these structures of the pantheon that are the subject of research, not the deities in isolation," he does so in the context of a forthright rejection of Burkert's more evolutionary 'historical

---

das Kultbild. Dieser Komplex indessen ist keineswegs unauflöslich; dies macht es prinzipiell unmöglich, 'die' Geschichte eines bestimmten Gottes zu schreiben."

[24] Cf. Parker 2005, 394: "A comprehensive study of Greece is an impossible deal."

positivist'[25] approach to Greek religion. After all, the Burkertian approach necessarily results in a

> pantheon (that) could not fail to appear as a mere conglomeration of gods, an assemblage of unusual personages of diverse origin, the products, in random circumstances, of fusion, assimilation, and segmentation. They seem to find themselves in association rather by virtue of accidents of history than by the inherent requirements of an organized system, demonstrating on the intellectual level the need for classification and organization, and satisfying exact functional purposes on the social level.[26]

Revealingly, what is meant as a crushing criticism by the critic is precisely what the target would appreciate as a not totally incorrect summary of his central thesis.[27] Likewise, Burkert's response[28] involves a point-blank confrontation with the structuralistic catechism of Vernant by pointing out:

> The danger in this approach is, of course, that the historically given reality will perforce be curtailed for the sake of the system and its logical structure. Such relationships are good for thinking, but reality does not always follow suit; a certain stubbornness of the facts remains. Just as the Greek mind does not exist as a unified and definable structure, so the

---

[25] 'Historical positivism' is precisely what Vernant 1980, 212 ff. denounces in Nilsson, whose "purpose is to reveal the fundamentally composite, syncretic, heterogeneous nature of classical religion, which is regarded not as an organised whole but as a collection of gods associated together more as the result of historical chance than through any internal logic." And he speaks of: "A gallery of disparate portraits… disjointed perspective…little relation to each other….elements of different origins which happen by chance to have come together."

[26] Cf. also M. Detienne, Expérimenter dans le champ des polythéismes, *Kernos* 10 (1997) 57–72, who presents a thoughtful re-consideration of the structuralistic approach to Greek polytheism, and of his own position in it, with emphatic recognition of Dumézil's earlier contributions.

[27] Burkert himself in his 'Schlusswort' to his Festschrift (Graf 1998) 442, after first signalizing modern (not least French) modes of 'erfinden' or 'constructing' Greek religion, continues: "Mein Eindruck war immer der, daß es nicht um eine Erfindung gehe, sondern um ein Finden." Deduction versus induction, one might say. This personal stance is further elucidated in a retrospective reflection on his own work: W. Burkert, 'Mythos und Ritual' im Wechsel der Moderne, in: Horstmanshoff 2002, 1–22. As for instance (p. 14): "Ich straübe mich eher gegen die Destruktion des Objektiven und möchte insbesondere die kritische Auflösung der Begriffe Mythos und Ritual, die etwa Marcel Detienne und Claude Calame eingeleitet haben, nicht mitmachen."

[28] Burkert 1985, 217. And see especially the provocative first chapter of his Sather lectures (Burkert 1979) 1–34, espec. 10–14, in which he forcefully censures the essentially a-historic and static nature of Levi-Straussian structuralism (which is not necessarily the same structuralism as that of the Paris school).

> Greek pantheon cannot be regarded as a closed and harmonized system. Even if the system could be described specifically for each place and time and even for each individual, it would still remain unstable and full of gaps, in the same way that the experience of each individual, in spite of all striving for wholeness, remains disparate and heterogeneous.

Accordingly, like their views on the impossibility to adequately define one single god in isolation, so, too, their assessments of 'divergences, disparities, and contradictions' (Vernant 1980, 271), radically diverge. Vernant, in whose view the polytheistic pantheon is a product and reflection of contemporaneous socio-political structures and the concomitant mental categories, warns against fatalistically putting them down to pure accident or the whims of individual fancy. Rather we should consider "whether as part of an ordained arrangement, they may be as meaningful as congruities and accordances."[29] Contrarily, Burkert, who views early Greek religion as an amalgam of Mycenaean relics, novel influences from changing social circumstances in Greece, and last but not least a strong cultural influx of Near-Eastern elements, is not prone to regarding inconsistencies as reflexions of cultural, social of mental constructions, let alone as a "vital intellectual product, possessing its own logic."[30] Rather, in his view, they are the result of historical processes and multifarious influences from different directions: "This semiotic system is neither closed nor free of contradiction, especially as local cult traditions again and again obtrude their influence."[31] This seminal difference in the assessment of contradiction,

---

[29] Although it is not my intention at this stage to pass judgement on, or pronounce a preference for, one of the two opponents, I cannot conceal that my own two books on *Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion* (Versnel 1990 and 1993) are based on precisely this principle. My treatment of ambiguities and contradictions, however, generally differs from that of the Paris school.

[30] Bruit-Schmitt 1992, 185.

[31] Burkert 1985, 124. In his only survey of Greek religion, viz. his entry 'Greek Religion', in: *ER* vol. V (1987) 99–118, espec. 103 (= Vernant 1990, 42), Vernant could not smooth over this potential obtrusion by local traditions: "To be sure a Greek god is defined by the set of relationships that unite or put him in opposition to other divinities of the pantheon, but the theological structures brought to light are too numerous and, especially, too diverse to be integrated into the same pattern. According to the city, the sanctuary, or the moment, each god enters into a varied network of combinations with the others. Groups of gods do not conform to a single model that is more important than others; they are organized into a plurality of configurations that do not correspond exactly but compose a table with several entries and many axes, the reading of which varies according to the starting point and the perspective adopted." There seems to be little awareness that this threatens to undermine the neat system of the Greek pantheon as vindicated in his 'confession of faith' quoted above.

inconsistency and disparity, which we shall encounter again in Chapter IV, is probably the most revealing expression of the different positions in terms of oppositions between the structural and the contingent, the designed and the arbitrary, the topical and the evolutionary. In sum, *kosmos* versus *chaos*.

What we have seen so far must suffice to give a rough idea of the crucial issues of this titanic late-modern debate. On one side there is a great thinker: "Vernant is constantly thinking, and as he thinks he writes," thus one admirer.[32] Another, no less sympathizing commentator points out "some of the mirroring, even mimetic, effects that account for the intimate relationship between the observer—here: Vernant—and the observed."[33] Consequently, it is sometimes honestly conceded that he more or less imposes his ideas about the Greeks on the material he is working on: "he does not collect evidence in order to make a case but rather cites the material in order to illustrate his ideas,"[34] thus constructing rather than reconstructing an archaic and classical Greece that belongs to Vernant.

On the other side there is the greatest living authority on Greek religion, who, though equally striving to become one with his material, starts from the opposite point of departure to reach the ideal state of *henosis*:

> In particular a god cannot be constructed to fill a gap; one must come to know him, he must reveal himself, and so all kinds of contingent factors come into play. The language of polytheism can only be learned passively, as it were; it is impossible to have an active command of it. What is present at hand may be interpreted, but postulates of a grammar can scarcely be sustained.[35]

---

[32] J. Redfield, J.-P. Vernant, Structure and History, *History of Religions* 68 (1991) 69–74, espec. 70.

[33] Zeitlin 1991, 10, aptly pointing out the danger that "the modes of inquiry are enmeshed in the very system they aim to explicate," referring to R.P. Harrison, The Ambiguities of Philology, *Diacritics* 16 (1986) 14–20.

[34] Redfield *o.c.* (above n. 32), 70. Or one example of a less sympathising phrasing: Naerebout 1997, 305: "Thus I see in the French Structuralist efforts in the field of ancient thought examples of order *imposed* instead of order *discovered*. (…) I see clever, but in the end unfounded attempts to turn a lot of scattered material into a single, coherent whole."

[35] Burkert 1985, 218.

In a lecture given at Oxford the great von Wilamowitz once said: "To make the ancients speak, we must feed them with our own blood."[36] Is not this reciprocity between the researcher and his material characteristic of both scholars under discussion, despite their basic differences? And would not both of them nod in approval at Steiner's words: "the truly great scholar becomes as one with his material. (....) It will become his without ceasing to be itself"?[37] The startling—and fascinating—result, however, is that two eminent scholars, while both intensely identifying themselves with their object of study, yet arrive at (or depart from?) radically opposite insights concerning the morphology of polytheism.[38]

It is not my aim to analyse the differences in cultural and intellectual backgrounds, if not belief systems, that may have fostered this opposition between the scholarly approaches of these two intellectual icons.[39] I did feel, however, that at least one lecture of this last Sather series of the twentieth century might draw attention to this debate. Moreover, this particular dispute excelled in the explicit clarity of argument and counter argument. We must realize, however, that

---

[36] H. Lloyd-Jones, *Blood for the Ghosts: Classical Influences in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London 1982) 200. The idea goes back to Nietzsche: "It is only if we give them our soul, that [the works of earlier times] can go on living: it is *our* blood that makes them speak to *us*" (Assorted Opinions and Maxims 126 in: *Human all too Human*).

[37] "The Friend of a Friend," *New Yorker* (January 23, 1990) 133–136, as quoted by Zeitlin 1991, 10. Or in the words of the dust cover of R. MacMullen, *Feelings in History, Ancient and Modern* (Claremont Cal. 2003): "to read with empathy." All this comes close to what H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (translation of *Wahrheit und Methode,* London 1981) 358, in the wake of Dilthey calls: "'fusing' one's own 'horizon' of understanding with the horizon of the author." But his sense of 'truth' is quite different from the ideal of correctly representing what the text meant to the author or his audience (cf. Ch. II n. 103).

[38] The demand to develop a 'morphology of polytheism' was expressed by Brelich as quoted by Gladigow 1983, 292.

[39] I cannot withhold though that a great admirer of Vernant, F. Zeitlin 1991, 8, situates Vernant in the typically French cultural tradition marked by a penchant for "reason, logic and exacting analysis," and "a certain passion for order, system, and intelligibility." Moreover, "there is the insistence on the triadic form of argument with a beginning, middle and end or the division of a problem into three parts: in short 'structure'" (*ibid.* 9) resulting in a "meeting of minds when French culture encounters the Hellenic world." See on the differences between French, German (and English) manners of exposition in scholarly discourse: P. Antes, Brillianz und Begrenztheit französischer Exposés: Ein Vergleich mit dem englishen und deutschen Vortrag, *Französisch heute* 9 (1978) 227–233; *idem,* Der wissenschaftliche Vortrag: Englische, französische und deutsche Darstellungsformen im Vergleich, *Publizistik* 3 (1992) 322–330. Most amusing.

when we ask whether the Greek pantheon was *chaos* or *kosmos*, this does not mean that the two terms should be necessarily conceived in Vernantian or Burkertian terms. As a matter of fact, the dispute on this question pervades all relevant scholarly discussion and no student can ignore its impact or refrain from reflection and the question of choice. This appears most conspicuously in the textbooks on Greek Religion that mushroomed over the last fifteen years. A comparison between the very Parisian *Religion in the Ancient Greek City* by Bruit-Zaidman and Schmitt-Pantel with Burkert's own *Greek Religion* is indeed illuminating. As for the treatment of the gods, for instance, Burkert adopts the traditional custom of systematically devoting separate treatments to each of the Olympian gods, one after the other. Those Gallic and Gallicizing authors, on the other hand, who follow in the track of the Paris school and hence feel committed to its creed that this is blasphemy, necessarily opt for a different organisation of their books. This principle is now widely accepted, also by scholars of a different denomination.[40]

I compared here a book of disciples, or at least adherents, with one of a protagonist. The reason is that, different from the 'Ecole de Paris',[41] one cannot speak of a 'school' of Burkert, *inter alia* because his scholarly activities display an impressive diversity and his theoretical points of departure cannot be captured under one catchword. Scholars have followed in his tracks but mostly on issues different from the one

---

[40] E.g. in: Price 1999; V. Pirenne-Delforge, 'Religion grecque', in: Y. Lehmann *et alii*, *Religions de l'Antiquité* (Paris 1999) 78–175. Also in the works of Jost and Mikalson mentioned in the text. Cf. Bremmer 1994, 11: "Gods have not been at the very centre of modern discussion of Greek religion," who in his turn gives the gods their due in his first chapter (and see his addenda in the second printing 1999, 102 n. 2). It is exactly at this point that the most pointed critical review of Burkert's handbook, namely B. Gladigow in *GGA* 235 (1983) 16, takes its starting point: "Eine polytheistische Religion durch einen Katalog von Göttern zu beschreiben, oder als Interpretationssystem vorzuführen, sind weitauseinanderliegende Ansätze, deren Zugriffsweisen je andere Gegenstände hervorrufen. Was sind also die Gegenstände dieser griechischen Religionsgeschichte, welches ist der methodische Zugang,- und welche Alternativen gibt es?"

[41] This much used sobriquet may be "quelque peu réductrice" when applied to the post-Vernantian line of 'Parisian' research, as rightly noted by St. Georgoudi in: Georgoudi *e.a.* 2005, 115, n. 1, whose contribution to that volume is the most illustrative testimony of the radical changes. In E. Thomassen 2004, 283, Georgoudi herself had already referred to her latest publication as "an auto-critique, from the beginning to the end." Like others, e.g. Thomassen *ibidem*, I use the term 'Paris School' *vel similia* as a catchword for the works of Vernant, Detienne and Vidal-Naquet and their closest adherents.

under discussion. In the question of 'chaos versus cosmos' in polytheism, instead of direct influence one rather observes a convergence of related viewpoints among scholars. Many of them will come to the fore in the course of this chapter. I here single out M. Jost, *Aspects de la vie religieuse en Grèce* (Paris 1992) and J.D. Mikalson, *Ancient Greek Religion* (Malden MA 2005) since in their first chapters they open—very similar—perspectives on polytheism, divine identities, and distinctions between national and local pantheons[42] that may be regarded as neat oppositions to the structuralist schemes as defended by the Paris equipe. Others, of course, have continued following their own tracks,[43] as do more and more scholars in recent times taking their departure from novel insights in theory and method in religious studies. Some of them explicitly or implicitly refuse to choose between the views of Burkert and Vernant.[44] I myself have been interested in related themes from the seventies of the last century onwards, boring my students to death with the questions, problems and suggestions that the Sather Lectures gave me the opportunity to expand on in more detail.

The Greek pantheon: order or chaos? Is this a correct question when approaching Greek religion? Perhaps not, but to find out we must now leave theoretical discussions and go *ad fontes*.

---

[42] Mikalson rather briefly, but he had frequently hinted at the problems in earlier works. His book is composed in a fashion similar to that of Jost, a book that, to judge from his bibliographical references, has escaped his attention. I will return to their and others' viewpoints.

[43] With regard to the issue of polytheism I mention in particular B. Gladigow in a range of insightful articles as listed in the bibliography, and Rowe 1976, who anticipated many later students including the present writer in his fresh views on polytheistic (and, as we will discuss in Chapter III, monotheistic) trends in Greek religion, focusing as he writes on "the contrast between the relatively unified picture of the Greek pantheon in the literary tradition espec. Homer and Hesiod, and the extreme variety of the objects of Greek piety at the level of cult-practice." For an illuminating survey of the history of local versus global studies of Greek religion see: G. Casadio, Local versus globale nello studio della religione greca, in: D. Giacometti (ed.), *METAPONTO. Gli dei e gli eroi nella storia di una polis di Magna Grecia* (Cosenza 2005) 241–271.

[44] As I did in my earlier work, especially *TER UNUS*, introduction. For explicit enunciations see e.g. Bremmer 1994, 23: "It would be wrong to choose between the views of Burkert and Vernant," with brief discussion (unfortunately in the context of his own distinction between 'orderly' and 'disorderly' gods, which, in my view, is not successful. See below p. 145); Parker 2005, 387–395, on which see above n. 11.

2. Ingredients for Chaos

1. *In search of identities*

Recognizing a god: who is who?

Let us first return to the problems with which Odysseus and the inhabitants of Lystra saw themselves confronted. They offer an exemplary introduction to the complexities of polytheism. Appearing gods, especially when they manifest themselves in the shape of a mortal being,[45] provoke problems of identification. Naturally so. But ancient Greek epiphany reports never stop further complicating the issue. They may stage the personal appearance of a god in his own shape, or in the form of his cult statue, or in the shape of a human person, or in that of an animal. Or the manifestation may lack the element of normal corporeal appearance and take the form of vague images such as *phasmata, eidola, phantasiai*.[46] Or, again, what is perceived is no visible bodily manifestation at all, but only a miracle, for instance a sudden miraculous cure or natural marvel, which nonetheless may be interpreted as a testimony of the presence of a god.[47]

Given the plethora of divine identities, the human subject must decide, and may do so in different ways. Generally, divine apparitions in dreams do not raise serious problems of identification. Even modern dreamers know that the life-size white rabbit appearing in their dream is actually uncle Harry because the dream is subtitled. Visions perceived in a waking situation may provide comparable clues. For instance, visitors to a centre of pilgrimage know that the supernatural

---

[45] As they often do. In Hom. *Od*. 17.484 ff. the suitors warn Antinoos not to maltreat the stranger: "Suppose he is a god, descended from heaven! For gods in guise of strangers from afar in every form do roam our cities, marking the sin and righteousness of men." Cf. Apollo and Poseidon in *Il.* 21.443 ff.; 7.452 f. Also *Il.* 24.29 f. B.C. Dietrich, Divine Epiphanies in Homer, *Numen* 30 (l983) 53–79, takes Homeric epiphanies as a literary device with no appreciable relationship with religious reality. Contrarily, O. Tsagarakis, Die Epiphanie Athenes im A. der Ilias: Psychologie oder Religion? *Gymnasium* 87 (1980) 57–80, forcefully (and in my view far more convincingly) defends the religious impact of Athena's epiphany. On gods visiting mortals in human form: Weniger 1923–4, 16–57; Flückiger-Guggenheim 1984. On the question: god or man? see: Pfister 1924, 312 ff.

[46] A survey of different forms of appearance in Versnel 1987.

[47] On the question whether *all* these different types of manifestation were referred to as *epiphaneiai* in Greek language: H.S. Versnel, *Epiphaneia. A Study in Perception* (in preparation).

materialization appearing to them, whether recognizable or not, must be the local god or saint.[48] The believer sees what he expects to see.[49]

Generally, in the case of epiphany, the question is not whether the person you see *is* a god—you know (s)he is[50]—but *which* god it is you see. Odysseus' words exemplarily reveal the problem: "Hard is it, goddess, for a mortal man to know you when he meets you (…) for you take whatever shape you will" (*Od.* 13.311 ff.). Much the same in a more or less gnomic expression in *H.Dem.* 111: "difficult to see are gods for mortals" (χαλεποὶ δὲ θεοὶ θνητοῖσι ὁρᾶσθαι).[51] True enough, gods in epiphany may appear in a clearly recognizable characteristic shape.[52] Moreover, in literature the author—as most exemplarily again Homer—often lends a hand, for instance by prompting the gods themselves to establish their identities, or by furnishing them with their attributes. Not always, however. Odysseus had as little idea about the identity of the (river-)god to whom he prayed for help (whom the reader had no way of identifying either) as his son Telemachos knew

---

[48] Just so, when a temple or a city is rescued from an enemy attack or other perils through a divine epiphany, as a rule there is little doubt that it is the god of the temple or the tutelary god of the city who performed the salvation. Most illuminative are the inscriptions mentioning *epiphaneiai* as collected and discussed in H.S. Versnel, *o.c.* preceding note.

[49] In votive pictures portraying the appearance of the holy Virgin (and her saving miracle) pinned on the walls of a centre of pilgrimage, usually this holy Virgin has all the features of the main cult statue of the church. See: M. Brauneck, *Religiöse Volkskunst* (Köln 1978); R. Creux, *Ex voto. Die Bilderwelt des Volkes* (Frauenfeld 1980). Cf. also the discussion below n. 167. On typical phenomena as 'make believe' and 'seeing what one expects to see' I found very helpful: J. Runzo, Visions, Pictures and Rules, *Religious Studies* 13 (1977) 303–325.

[50] Usually, gods in epiphany betray themselves as gods—though not necessarily as *specific* gods—by a range of signals: beauty, lustrous radiance, flagrance, size, sound of voice, the way they move, the miracles they perform etc. Telemachos assumes that the poor foreigner (whom he does not yet recognize as his father) actually was a god all the time, but came to this insight only after Athena had given the stranger a rejuvenating cure and new outfit (*Od.* 16.181–185). See: Pfister l924, 314–317; Pax, l955, 30; Mussies 1988, 4–7; Gladigow 1990a, 97–101. On equation of size and beauty: W.J. Verdenius, ΚΑΛΛΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΜΕΓΕΘΟΣ, *Mnemosyne* 2 (1949) 294–298.

[51] The context clarifies that it is about recognizing the old women not as *a* goddess but as *goddess Demeter*. See: Richardson comm. *ad. loc.* and 94 ff. Comparable, but different in its distinction between people who do see the goddess (Odysseus) and those who do not (Telemachos): Hom. *Od.* 16.161, οὐ γάρ πως πάντεσσι θεοὶ φαίνονται ἐναργεῖς. In Hom *Il.* 1.194 Athena makes herself visible to Achilles alone. Many parallels in A.S. Pease, Some Aspects of Invisibility, *HSCP* 53 (1942) 1–36.

[52] Mussies 1988, 9–17 gives a good survey.

who was the god that arrived in mortal guise and departed as a bird[53] (whom the reader knew to be Athena).[54] Both observers resigned themselves to divine anonymity and addressed the unknown gods with the words: "Listen, sire, whoever you are" (*Od.* 5.445), and "Listen to me, you God that came to me yesterday" (*Od.* 2.262). Such expressions of theological suspension resound throughout antiquity. Not even the new monotheistic religion could get round them: Paul had no idea whom he saw or heard—or saw *and* heard—in his vision on the way to Damascus. So he asked "Who are you, Lord?" and received the required information (with world-shattering consequences).[55]

But when you see a putatively divine person in human (or other) guise you may also take another course of action. Even if we admit that Odysseus' surmise concerning the divine status of the girl may have been inspired by hunger and the wish to alleviate it,[56] still the rhetoric

---

[53] F. Dirlmeier, Die Vogelgestalt homerischer Götter, *Sb. Heidelb. Ak. Phil.-Hist. Kl.* (1967); H. Bannert, Zur Vogelgestalt der Götter bei Homer, *WS* 12 (1978) 29–42.

[54] Just as in *Il.* 13.59–72 Aiax is sure that it was one of the Olympians who visited him in the appearance of Kalchas—ἀρίγνωτοι δὲ θεοί περ—, but has no idea that it is Poseidon.

[55] As Acts 9.3–9; 22.6–11 and 26.12–16 provide divergent versions of the story, miracles of ingenuity have been produced in (unsuccessful) attempts to reconcile them. Even after survey studies as e.g. by E. Pfaff, *Die Bekehrung des H.Paulus in der Exegese des 20 Jhdts* (Rome 1942); G. Lohfink, *Paulus vor Damaskus. Arbeitsweisen der neueren Bibelwissenschaft dargestellt an den Texten Apg 9, 1–19; 22, 3–21, 26, 9–18* (Stuttgart 1942), the discussion never ended. See: Versnel 1987, 42 f. More recently: G. Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte* II (Freiburg 1982) with ample literature at pp. 19 f., who refers to the commentaries by Conzelmann and Haenchen. See also: F.E. Brenk, Greek Epiphanies and Paul on the Road to Damaskos, in: U. Bianchi (ed.), *The Notion of 'Religion' in Comparative Research.* (*Proc. XVIth Congress of the IAHR* 1990, Rome 1994) 415–424; J.N. Bremmer, Close Encounters of the Third Kind: Heliodorus in the Temple and Paul on the Road to Damascus, in: *idem* 2008, 215–234.

[56] Flattering language to win over the addressee? Quite possible. Note that at *Od.* 6.276–281 Nausikaa seems to pay Oysseus with his own coin by the courteous suggestion that people may consider him to be a god. But, on the other hand, note that in *H. Apollo* 449 ff. the very same occurs, and in very similar terms ("You are nothing like mortal men in shape or stature, but as the deathless gods"), but there the reader (not the speaker) knows it *is* a god who has assumed a human appearance. Again the same, but in a more ambiguous situation, as becomes an ambiguous god, in *H. Dionysos* 1–31, where the dilemma grows into a debate: is he or isn't he a god, and if he is, which one: Zeus, Apollo, Poseidon? Again differently, in *H.Aphrodite* 91 ff., where Aphrodite having adopted human countenance is addressed by Anchises: "Hail Lady, whoever of the blessed ones you are that are come to our house, whether Artemis, or Leto, or golden Aphrodite, or high-born Themis, or bright-eyed Athene (or one of the Graces or Nymphs)," and where Aphrodite emphatically denies that she is a goddess. See especially: J. Strauss Clay 1989, 174: "Does he really believe he has encountered a god or is he employing "prudent flattery" or "adopting the same diplomatic attitude Odysseus used to address Nausikaa," quoting P.M. Smith, *Nursling*

of persuasion could not sidestep—rather indeed gladly exploited—the problem of identity. Odysseus selected shape and features as parameters for identification. The Lycaonians, equally in the dark about the identity of their two divine visitors, resorted to circumstantial evidence such as profession, function and quality to go by for their identification and defined the two apostles as Zeus and Hermes accordingly. The runner Pheidippides—running through Arcadia in the heat of the day (something not to be recommended)[57]—was pounced upon by a mysterious being (Hdt. 6.105).[58] Even if the god would not have made himself known—as he did in a later phase—the runner knew it was Pan, because this was simply the way Pan[59]—or the Midday Demon[60] or Ephialtes[61]—used to behave. When, during a cure in the sanctuary of Epidauros, you dream that a snake is licking your afflicted shoulder

---

of Immortality: A Study of the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite (Frankfurt 1981) 46 ff. Clay energetically defends Anchises's sincerity, as did before her N. van der Ben, De Homerische Aphrodite-hymne 2, *Lampas* 14 (1981) 67–107, espec. 72 (in my translation): "Odysseus does not doubt for one moment that the girl is a mortal, while Anchises is convinced that he encounters a goddess." So too, more recently, A. Faulkner, *The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite: Introduction, Text, and Commentary* (Oxford 2008) 173 f. It would be wrong not to keep in mind while reading the Nausikaa passage that to the Greek it just might end up with the proclamation: "I am a god", as in *H.Dionysos* 55 ff. Yet the opposite reaction may occur as well: "We are no more than men; of the same nature as yourselves," shouted Paul and Barnabas (*Acts* 14.15); "I am not a god…I am your father," says Odysseus to Telemachos (*Od.* 16.187 f.), both of them honestly. "I am not a goddess (…) but a mortal," says Aphrodite (vv. 107–8) *dis*honestly. A.L.T. Bergren, *The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*: Tradition and Rhetoric, Praise and Blame, *ClAnt* 8 (1989) 1–41, espec. 41: "the Hymn is unequivocal in this element of its aetiology, its proclamation that any virgin bride might be Aphrodite in disguise, and that no man 'seized by eros' for the bride can possibly know the difference" may go a bit far. See now: V.L. Kenaan, Aphrodite: The Goddess of Appearances, and J. Burbidge, O quam te memorem? Interpreting Venus in *Aeneid* 1.31, Chs. 3 and 4 in: Smith & Pickup 2010. Cf. also Verg. *Aen.* 1.325–329, and the words of the Delphic Pythia to the Spartan Lycurgus: "I wonder if you are a god or man, but I think rather that you are a man" (Hdt. 1.65.3).

[57] On midday as the typical period for visions of an 'epileptic' or 'paraplectic' nature: W. Drexler, Meridianus Daemon, in: *RLM* II (1987) 2832 ff.; E. Livrea, *Gnomon* 58 (1986) 707; J.N. Bremmer, *ZPE* 75 (1988) 87; and see n. 60 below for further literature on the Midday Demon.

[58] For the historical setting of the story: Garland 1992, 48–51.

[59] Borgeaud 1979; Himmelmann-Wildschütz l957; C. Meillier, L'épiphanie du dieu Pan au livre II de Daphnis et Chloé, *REG* 88 (1975) 121–132. Cf. also Gow *ad* Theocr. 1.15.

[60] C.D.G. Müller, Vom Teufel, Mittagsdämon und Amuletten, *JbAC* 17 (1974) 91–102; in biblical context: *DDD* s.v. Midday Demon. And cf. above n. 57.

[61] Popular etymology has it that Ephialtes derived his name from 'jumping on' a person. See: W.H. Roscher, Ephialtes. Eine pathologisch-mythologische Abhandlung über die Alpträume und Alpdämonen, *Abh. Sachs. Ges. Wiss. Phil.-Hist Kl.* 20 (Leipzig 1900).

or, while awake, you experience a young man touching it, then you can bet that both are manifestations of the god Asklepios.[62]

Appearance, quality, characteristic behaviour, (professional) domicile, these are some of the very diverse clues to determine the identity of a god. In order to do so one must possess a minimal amount of knowledge or expertise. One must know that as a rule Artemis is represented as a youthful unmarried maiden, that according to myth Hermes was the messenger of the gods, that Pan likes to bounce upon people, or you must be aware that you are situated in the sanctuary of a healing (and appearing) god. Even so, one can shamefully miss the mark. Try and guess which is the god (*not* identified by helpful paraphernalia[63] or epigraphic comment) who is depicted in a vase painting or is represented by a statue and see how often you are wrong, simply because your (or our) knowledge of mythical or cultic context is insufficient and the imagery unspecific.[64] Not only for the modern observer. For Greeks, too,[65] it was not always "obvious who it is" as we read on a bowl with a relief of Herakles and Auge.[66]

---

[62] See Ch. V for evidence and literature.

[63] However, divine attributes are no reliable identifiers either, due to their polyvalence. See: H. Metzger, Sur le valeur de l'attribut dans l'interprétation de certaines figures du monde éleusinien, in: *idem* (ed.), *ΕΙΔΩΛΟΠΟΙΙΑ. Actes du colloque sur les problèmes de l'image dans le monde méditerranéen classique* (Rome 1985) 173–179; J. Mylonopoulos, Odysseus with a Trident? The Use of Attributes in Ancient Greek Imagery, in: *idem* 2010, 171–204.

[64] See e.g. on the problems of identification of goddesses in vase painting: Laurens & Lissarrague 1990. You find out that you were right or wrong when an expert has been able to put the image *en serie* with others that can be identified with certainty. All this only if you have been lucky enough to avoid the common error of taking for a god what actually is a human being: F. Brommer, Gott oder Mensch? *Arch. Jahrb.* 101 (1986) 37–53; A. Stewart, When is a Kouros not an Apollo? The Tenea 'Apollo' Revisited, in: M.A. del Chiaro (ed.), *Corinthiaca: Studies in Honor of Darrell A. Amyx* (New York 1986) 54–70; N. Brüggemann, Kontexte und Funktionen von Kouroi im archaischen Griechenland, in: M. Meyer & N. Brüggemann (edd.), *Kore und Kouros. Weihegaben für die Götter* (Vienna 2007) 93–226, espec. 125–130. The problem of identification becomes even more precarious in the case of nude women: U. Kreilinger, Zwischen Göttin und Hure. Nackte Frauen in der attischen Vasenmalerei spätarchaischer Zeit, *Hellenika* 2 (*Jahrbuch f. griechische Kultur und deutsch-griechische Beziehungen*, Münster 2007), 21–41, espec. 28 f.

[65] Exemplary: Lucian, *Syr.D.* 31–32, on the image of Hera in the temple of Atargatis at Hierapolis: "Taken all together, she is Hera, but she also has something of Athena and Aphrodite and Selene and Rhea and Artemis and Nemesis and Parcae." On this and other types of criticism of divine statuary in later antiquity, see: Ando 2008, 21–42, Ch. II: Idols and their Critics.

[66] We read the word ΔΗΛΑΔΗ which is interpreted in this contextually extended sense of the normal meaning of δηλαδή (plainly, manifestly) by J. Hind, *The inscriptions*

Hence, in situations of an epiphany, Greeks tended to sidestep the precarious problem of choice in order to avoid error or out of sheer desperation. One solution, as we saw, was just to address the unknown god as "Sire" or "Lady." Another, only attested in literary works, was to explicitly display that there *is* a choice, without, however, making an attempt at solving it. As, for instance, Anchises[67] did when he addressed Aphrodite as follows: "are you perhaps Artemis, or Leto, or golden Aphrodite, or high-born Themis, or bright-eyed Athene (or one of the Graces or Nymphs)?" a listing scheme that we shall encounter in quite different contexts as a privileged strategy of polytheism.

In the case of the Zeus and Hermes of the Lycaonians, we can practically prove that the author of Acts (or Paul himself)[68] inserted his own—mistaken[69]—interpretation of the locals' preference for Zeus and Hermes. The Lycaonian gods going under those names were *not* the well-known Olympian deities with their well-known functions of king and messenger of the gods. They were a regionally very popular, non-Greek, divine couple, with different functions, who were later identified with these Greek gods.[70] The same couple is also reported as having visited—and been hosted by—old Philemon and Baucis in the very same region.[71] Apparently these gods had a bent for appearing to

---

on the silver phialai and jug from Rogozen, in: B.F. Cook (ed.), *The Rogozen Treasure* (London 1989) 38–43. *Asemoi andriantes*, being statues without a distinct character, both those without an easily recognizable appearance and those without specific attributes, formed a special category already for the Greeks themselves: Mylonopoulos 2010, 172 f.

[67] Above n. 56.

[68] The latter might be the case if Paul in the letter to the Galatians 4.14, with the expression "you received me as the messenger of God" (ἀλλ' ὡς ἄγγελος Θεοῦ ἐδέξασθέ με) referred to his reception as Hermes, which is the more likely since this is the only time he refers to himself in these terms.

[69] Probably *deliberately* mistaken. On possible motives for the author's emphasis on the specific functions of Greek Zeus and Hermes see: C. Breytenbach, Zeus und der lebendige Gott: Anmerkungen zu Apostelgeschichte 14.11–17, *NTS* 39 (1993) 396–413; L. Martin, Gods or Ambassadors of God? Barnabas and Paul in Lystra, *NTS* 41 (1995) 152–156. Lane Fox 1986, 99 ff., however, had already forcefully—and delightfully—argued for the authenticity of this "scene, the delight of Raphael."

[70] H. Elton, Romanization and Some Cilician Cults, in L. de Ligt, E.A. Hemelrijk & H.W. Singor (edd.), *Roman Rule and Civic Life: Local and Regional Perspectives*, (Amsterdam 2004) 231–241, once more argues for the continuity of local religious practices and beliefs in the combination of Zeus and Hermes in their Hellenized forms.

[71] Ov. *Met.* 8.611–724, no doubt going back to a(n unknown) Hellenistic model. On its narrative qualities: E. Gowers, Talking Trees: Philemon and Baucis Revisited, *Arethusa* 38 (2005) 331–365. Most extensive and still fundamental treatment:

mortals in human shape. It is for that reason—and *not* on account of their respective Greek mythical specialism—that the Lykaonians identified Paul and Barnabas with these gods.

Two Zeuses, two Hermeses: in either case we see one name accommodating two very different characters. Is this nothing but the result of the process generally referred to as 'syncretism'? Before we tackle this and related questions in more detail we will first discuss some further complications concerning divine identities in a polytheistic context.

Which god must I pray to, to which bring sacrifice?

Given the confusion and lack of precision on the point of identities of appearing gods, we should not be surprised that polytheistic Greeks (and Romans) might find themselves equally at a loss whenever it came to a related but different issue of choice,[72] namely the question to whom they should pray or sacrifice in order to secure divine support or advice. An allegedly transparent structure of the pantheon with a neat specialization among the major gods or powers did not, modern theory notwithstanding, appear very helpful in guiding human beings who were in doubt. This is quite natural and indeed unavoidable in situations of disaster where the sufferer may wonder: "Which god did we offend, that we are suffering this?"[73] A religious offence committed

---

L. Malten, Motivgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Sagengeschichte I, *Hermes* 74 (1939) 176–206; II, *Hermes* 75 (1940) 168–176, with full discussion of parallels to the motifs of *theoxenia*. Both F. Bömer, *P. Ovidius Naso, Metamorphoses, Kommentar VIII–IX* (Heidelberg 1977) 190–195, and A.S. Hollis, *Ovid: Metamorphoses Book VIII* (Cambridge 1970) 106 ff. lean heavily on Malten's work, the first especially focusing on a possible Biblical-Semitic background, the latter with more attention to local Phrygian influences. Essential is that an inscription from the vicinity of Lystra relating to a joint worship of Zeus and Hermes (W.M. Calder, *CR* 24 [1910] 76 ff.) added to others (Malten II, 1940, 168–171) testifies to a joint cult of two Anatolian gods "masquerading in Greek dress" (Hollis). Most relevant is that these gods are not hierarchically differentiated (Zeus Bronton, Zeus Helios side by side with Hermes *megistos*!). As always it was Louis Robert, *Hellenica* XIII, 29, who in a summary of the evidence added the most decisive datum: "Mais l'essentiel n'est-il pas un document vu à Lystra (!) par Buckler and Calder, statuette de l'époque impériale représentant Hermes avec l'aigle." All this provides a better explanation for their identification with Paul and Barnabas than the fact that Paul was more "loquacious" (Hollis 108). So, correctly, the major biblical commentators, e.g. H. Conzelmann, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Tübingen 1963) 87 f.; J. Zmijewski, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Regensburg 1984) 535 f. See more recently also L. Martin *o.c.* (above n. 69); St. Mitchell 1993, II 24.

[72] For this see also: Gladigow 1983 and 1990b.

[73] Hdt. 6.12.3: τίνα δαιμόνων παραβάντες τάδε ἀναπίμπλαμεν; The context makes it quite clear that in the given situation it is a proverbial expression, a *façon de dire*, as is Vergil's *quo numine laeso*. Even so, the expression signals the distinction with a

unintentionally is generally unspecific and cannot provide a helpful clue as to divine identities. Thus one finds the inhabitants of Dodona consulting their oracle: "Is it because of some human's impurity that we are suffering from this storm?" *(SEG* 19.427; Lhôte, no. 14). Private individuals ask "which gods (τίνας θεῶν) am I to appease to fare better?" (P.267 no. 12; Lhôte no. 65)[74] or "to which god must I sacrifice and which god must I appease to become healthier as to my eyes?" (P.267 no. 14; Lhôte no. 72).[75] The verb ἱλασκέσθαι, 'to appease a wrathful god', occurs in a few related Delphic oracles as well.[76] However,

---

monotheistic religion, where, the believer, in lieu of worrying about the identity of the god that may have been insulted, needs to be informed about the nature of the offence and of its redemption: "Christ always does bad things to me. I don't know what to do to satisfy him" (Banfield 1958, 124). Interestingly, the same is true for questions to the local god concerning the cause (and remedy) of illness and other misfortune as prevalent in the so-called confession stelai from Lydia and Phrygia, which testify to a henotheistic piety. See p. 45 and n. 77 below.

[74] In the source references, P. refers to Parke 1967; P.-W. to Parke and Wormell 1956; Lhôte = Lhôte 2006. On the oracles from Dodona see below n. 79.

[75] Scheer 2001, 46–47 in her chapter "Worum man betet: Gebetsinhalte," complains that we have few "Gebetstexte" from non-literary sources. She avers that in Versnel 1981a, 4 ff. I tried to circumvent this problem by equating ("gleichsetzen" [2x]) oracle questions from Dodona with ancient prayer texts. I did nothing of the kind nor am I (or anybody else) in desperate need of her ample demonstration that oracles are *not* the same as prayers. I used these oracles to illustrate "with what daily cares the common man was beset in Antiquity," which is precisely the maximum profit that Scheer herself is willing to accept. For that matter, many scholars have pointed out that the emotional involvement in questions submitted to an oracle may make it difficult to maintain a strict distinction between the wish to know (oracle) and the hope to achieve (prayer), as Croesus knew well in his altercation with Apollo and as is further attested by the rich Delphic treasure houses. See: Rudhardt 1958, 58 and 272 ff. Cf. for the junction of oracle and prayer in Egyptian oracle texts e.g. A. Bülow-Jacobsen, *ZPE* 57 (1984) 91 f. On Christian oracle questions with pleas such as: "give an oracle that is to my advantage" and instructions to pray during one or more nights (*not* in order to receive a negative oracle, one may presume), see: A. Papaconstantinou, Oracles chrétiens dans l'Égypte byzantine: le témoignage des papyrus, *ZPE* 104 (1994) 281–286. The assumption that, once the identity of the god has been revealed, the prayer would be much more elaborate, detailed or precise than "I pray that my eyes will be better," as Scheer seems to postulate, does not find support in the hundreds of brief votive inscriptions (mostly from later periods) as summarized in Versnel 1981, 8 ff. One may also compare the mostly *very* brief 'letters to God' consisting of the formula "for the health of…" in churches world-wide.

[76] P.-W. nos. 32; 326, 335. In later oracular practice of the imperial period and above all in Asia Minor both term and concept are common. E.g. already in an inscription of 4th–3d c. BC published by G.E. Bean, *JHS* 74 (1954) 85–110; cf. R. Merkelbach, *ZPE* 5 (1970) 48; *SEG* 40.1109; *SGO* I 01/09/01, the people of Kaunos inquiring which gods they must appease (ἱλασκομένου) to secure a good harvest with the answer of the oracle of Grynion: "Phoebus son of Leto and Zeus Patroos." A particularly interesting question from Didyma by a person who asked "which god he should placate in order

among the oracle questions of the classical period such questions form a minority. To go on the available evidence, mishap in daily life was not predominantly interpreted as a divine penalty in this period.[77]

Of more interest to our issue, however, is a different, more future-oriented and less guilt-inspired, type of inquiry, which brings us into the centre of oracular activity.[78] Once again, a brief glance into this specific type of evidence will set us on the track of an essential characteristic of Greek polytheism. In the sacred area of Zeus Naios and Dione at Dodona in Northwestern Greece numerous[79] oracle questions

---

to be able to (literally) 'recall' his wife from the Christian faith" (interroganti. . . . quem deum placando revocare possit uxorem suam a Christianismo): Aug. *CD* 19.23 after Porph. F 343 (Smith).

[77] A.W.H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility* (Oxford 1960) 255; R. Garland, Strategies of Religious Intimidation and Coercion in Classical Athens, in: P. Hellström & B. Alroth (edd.), *Religion and Power in the Ancient Greek World* (Stockhom 1996) 91–99, espec. 96; Mikalson 1983, 27–30; Parker 1983, 130; 278 ff.; Versnel 2002b, 41–47, where the striking difference with later religious mentalities as *inter alia* in evidence in parts of Asia Minor is analysed. In Phrygian confession-texts, for instance, as collected in Petzl 1994, people in misery are constantly on the lookout for possible religious offences that may explain their illness or mishap. See: Chaniotis 1995; *idem*, Under the Watchful Eyes of the Gods: Aspects of Divine Justice in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor, in: S. Colvin (ed.), *The Greco-Roman East. Politics, Culture, Society* (*Yale Classical Studies* 31, Cambridge 2004) 1–43. For the classical period our sources may suffer from distortion due to an Athenian bias.

[78] Out of the enormous literature on Greek oracles I mention the brief introduction by V. Rosenberger, *Griechische Orakel. Eine Kulturgeschichte* (Darmstadt 2001); T. Curnow, *The Oracles of the Ancient World* (London 2004), an exhaustive survey of all known oracle sites. Most recently: S. Iles Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination* (Malden/Oxford 2008). On political aspects: R. Parker, Greek States and Greek Oracles, in: P.A. Cartledge & F.D. Harvey (edd.), *Crux. Essays Presented to G.E.M. de Ste. Croix* (*History of Political Thought* 6 [1985]) 298–326; H. Bowden, *Classical Athens and the Delphic Oracle: Divination and Democracy* (Cambridge 2005). On the practical side of oracular activities, especially the 'ground personnel': St. Georgoudi, Les porte-parole des dieux: réflexions sur le personnel des oracles grecs, in: I. Chirassi-Colombo & T. Seppilli (edd.), *Sibille e Linguaggi Oracolari. Mito Storia Tradizione* (Macerata 1998) 315–365. See also the following notes.

[79] A.-Ph. Christidis *e.a.*, Magic in the Oracular Tablets of Dodona, in: Jordan *e.a.* 1999, 67–72, announces that some 4000 lead tablets with oracular questions "are nearly ready to appear in print" (and publishes five so far unpublished texts [*SEG* 49.637–641]). It was about time, too, for they were found in excavations of more than 60 years ago. S. Dakaris (†), I. Vokotopoulou (†), A.-F. Christidis (†), *Corpus des Lamelles Oraculaires de Dodone* I, (*CLOD*) is now announced as 'in the press'. Until recently *SEG* 15.385–409; 19.426–432; 23.474–476; 25.454; 43.318–331; 48.819–22, offered the easiest access to a majority of published oracle texts. Parke 1967 gives a selection of 38 oracles from *SEG* and earlier ones published by Carapanos and Pomtow. É. Lhôte, *Les lamelles oraculaires de Dodone* (Genève 2006), re-edits all texts published to date. As does Eidinow 2007, Ch. V. Cf. also J. Méndez-Dosuna, Notes de lecture sur les lamelles oraculaires de Dodone, *ZPE* 161 (2007) 137–144.

written on lead tablets have emerged. The texts range from the 6th to the 2nd centuries BC and were, to judge from the handwriting, as a rule written by the enquirers themselves, who used their own Greek dialects.[80]

Two formulaic questions prevail in the texts. One is the enquiry "whether it will be better (λώιον καὶ βέλτιον and variants) to act in a certain way…" The other is "To whom of the gods (and heroes) must I pray and/or sacrifice in order that I fare better?" (or "to achieve what I have in mind" and variants).[81] From the Dodonian oracle we do not have responses to *this* particular type of question. But here Delphi, with its far more renowned oracle, fills the gap.[82] There are significant differences between Dodona and Delphi.[83] The majority of the Dodonean questions concern private matters of individuals whose authentic autographs have come down to us.[84] Those of Delphi generally concern social and political units (or their representatives), *poleis*, realms, kings.[85] With few exceptions they have been transmitted

---

[80] Parke 1967, has an extensive discussion. See also: Versnel 1981a, 4–6; C. Tzouvara-Souli gives a survey of the information on daily life problems and the origins of the pilgrims in: Μνήμη Σωτήρη Δάκαρη (Ioannina 1997) 29–70 (in Greek). Cf. also: G. Rougemont, in: Y. Le Bohec & Y. Roman (edd.), *Épigraphie et histoire: acquis et problèmes* (Lyon 1998) 71–76. On the different dialects see: Lhôte 2006, 363–406.

[81] As for instance in *SEG* 15.395; 386.

[82] Collections: Parke-Wormell 1956; J. Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle: its Responses and Operations with a Catalogue of Responses* (Berkeley 1978).

[83] When, on the one hand, Sourvinou-Inwood 1988 = 2000b, 44–47, argues that "the individual was the basic cultic unit," and, on the other, Auffarth 1994b, 19 wishes to differentiate this view by stating: "Die Fragen, die dem Orakel vorgelegt werden, betreffen in der Regel *Poleis* als ganze, nicht Individuen," a comparison of Dodona and Delphi shows that both views are valid depending on the chosen contexts. The same is true for the putative opposition (as represented in Auffarth 1994b, 19) of Vernant's focus on the flight from rational decision-making into the irrationality of uncontrollable divine responses (Parole et signes muets, in: J.-P. Vernant *et alii* [edd.], *Divination et rationalité* [Paris 1974] espec. 11–19) versus Robert Parker's (*o.c.* [78 n. 78] 304) interpretation of the oracle as a rational forum for interstate negotiation.

[84] The collection of public enquiries in Parke pp. 259–262 is now superseded by Lhôte nos. 1–17. An example: in P. 260 no. 3 = Lhôte no. 3, the Corcyraeans ask "to which of the gods and heroes they should sacrifice and pray in order to obtain concord with good results" (τίνι κα θεῶν ἢ ἡρώων θύοντες καὶ εὐχ[ό]μενοι ὁμονοῖεν ἐ[π]ὶ τὠγαθόν. Cf. J. Vokotopulou, in: *La Magna Grecia e i grandi santuari della madre patria* (Taranto 1995) 63–90, discussing the oracle questions as collected in *SEG* 43.318–320: questions by the people of Tarentum and Regium.

[85] Sometimes we hear that both these oracles were consulted for the same issue. In 348 BC the Athenians received the same answer from both centres (ὁμοίως ἐκ Δελφῶν καὶ ἐκ Δωδώνης) (Dem. 21.51 = P.-W. no. 282). Fontenrose 253 h28 suggests that the prose text is from Dodona and the the one in verse from Delphi. Cf. no. 108. On the gradual shift towards private consultation at Delphi, see: M. Arnush, Pilgrimage to

through literary sources and are partially legendary. Yet, the phrasing of the questions relevant to our discussion is identical to that of Dodona, as for instance: "to which god must we sacrifice or pray in order to get the best of it?"[86] Hence, when Xenophon *Anab.* 3.1.5 f. (P.-W. no. 172) chose to ask Delphic Apollo "to whom of the gods he should sacrifice and pray in order to have a prosperous journey and a safe return," he followed a traditional course of action. As did Socrates (*ibid.*), who censured him for not having asked the other conventional question, no less common at Delphi:[87] "whether it would be better (λῷιον) for him to go or to stay."[88]

From Delphi (and elsewhere) we do have answers. However, if they may have been transparent and meaningful to the local priesthood, they were not nearly always so to the consultants. Here is an oracular answer to the question to which of the gods the Athenians should pay homage in order to defeat the Persians (P.-W. no. 102, 479 BC):

> You must pray to Zeus, to Hera of Kithairon, to Pan and the Sphragitic Nymphs, and sacrifice to the heroes Androkrates, Leukon, Peisandros, Damokrates, Hypsion, Aktaion, Polyeidos.

Plutarch *V.Arist.* 11.3, to whom we owe this oracle response, explains that the majority of these gods and heroes belonged to the pantheon of Plataea, where the battle to which the oracle referred, was to take place. Zeus, of course, is a deity common to all Greeks.[89]

---

the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi: Patterns of Public and Private Consultation, in: Elsner & Rutherford 2005, 97–110.

[86] P.-W. no. 283. Cf. nos. 32; 429, and cf. the oracle answers discussed below p. 48.

[87] In fact they cover 51.4% of Fontenrose's 'historical responses' (p. 21). It was so formulaic that Sulla made a pun on it, for which see: E. Badian, An Oracle for Delphic Apollo, *The Ancient History Bulletin* 11 (1987) 13. From the answers it appears that the Spartans, in doubt about how to oppose the Persian approach (479 BC), asked a question of the latter type and the Athenians one of the former (Plut. *Arist.* 11.3–5). On the discussion between Socrates and Xenophon see: L. Bruit-Zaidman, Xénophon entre dévotion privée et dévotion publique. L'exemple de l'Anabase, in: Dasen & Piérart 2005, 99–111, espec. 100 f.

[88] It is exactly on this question that we have an anwer in a tablet of Dodona (P.270, no. 23; Lhôte no. 12): "remain where you are and persevere." That this is an answer is ensured by the fact that it is written by another hand. See Lhôte pp. 355–358 for a discussion of oracular answers, assumed or confirmed.

[89] Plutarch does not give a verbatim oracle text but a close paraphrase. How easily gods or heroes may slip into or duck out of such lists appears from Clem. Al. *Protr.* 2.40, who records the following list of Plataean heroes from the oracle: Androkrates, Demokrates, Kuklaios, Leukon.

Understandably, the criterion of selection of gods and heroes here is not one of function or specialism, but one of local or regional relevance. In a situation of war it is not a bad idea to call in the assistance of the local gods. Less perspicuous, however, is the list prescribed by the Delphic oracle in answer to a question concerning health and good fortune (Dem. 21.51 = P.-W. no. 282, before 348 BC.):

> For good health you must sacrifice and pray to Zeus Hupatos, Herakles, Apollo Prostaterios. Concerning good fortune to Apollo Aguieus, Leto, Artemis....

And when the Athenians enquire to which god they should sacrifice or pray with respect to a celestial portent they learn (Dem. 43.66 = P.-W. no. 283, before 340 BC.):

> With respect to the portent it is to the Athenians' advantage to sacrifice with good omens (θύειν καὶ καλλιερεῖν) to Zeus Hupatos, Athena Hupate, Herakles, Apollo Soter. (...) Concerning good fortune to Apollo Aguieus, Leto, Artemis.

To a certain extent there is consistency between the two lists but the internal cohesion of the different gods and heroes in each of them, as well as the reason of the differences between the two is less than transparent.[90]

Finally, the question by Poseidonios of Halikarnassos (c. 300 BC?)[91] "what is better for him and his family to do?" receives the response:

> It will be better for them if they propitiate and honour in line with their ancestors Zeus Patroios and Apollo lord of Telmessos and the Moirai and the Mother of the Gods, and also to honour and propitiate Agathos Daimon of Poseidonios and Gorgis. If they continue to perform these rites it will be better for them.

A list of deities, partly of local relevance again, partly closely connected with the family, and partly of unclear connection with the enquirer. The addition, however, clarifies that the family was already in the habit of honouring some of these gods.

To summarize: the poor enquirer who was at a loss about which god he should address for specific worries and wishes might consult

---

[90] See: H. Bowden, *Classical Athens and the Delphic Oracle: Divination and Democracy* (Cambridge 2005) 118 and 123 f.

[91] *B.Mus.Inscr.* 4.1.896. It is well possible that this oracle comes from Telmessos. Following G. Daux, *RPh* 15 (1941) 11 ff., P.-W. *ad* no. 335 accepts it as Delphic.

an oracle, but the answers that he received did not excel in lucidity either. What catches the eye, however, is that the questions are always phrased in the singular: "to which of the gods" (τίνι ἂν θεῶν),[92] while *all* available answers mention extended and, at first sight, functionally untransparent and theologically incoherent lists of gods and heroes.[93] This principle of plurality appears to be so self-evident that Xenophon *loc. cit*, though having asked "to *which god* he should pray," relates as a matter of course that Apollo in his oracle listed "*the gods* to whom he should sacrifice."[94] The search for a—hopefully specific, expert or appropriate—god ends up with a list of gods. Let us keep this in mind.

Expressing theological doubt

Once you have learned—by oracle, tradition or situational preference—to which god or goddess you must address your prayer, can you be sure that the name you have in mind is indeed the name of the god whom you have in mind? No modern reader would cook up such a question if the Greek evidence would not prompt him to. Hesitative and dubitative formulas are not restricted to the areas of epiphany and divination, but abound in an astounding—and meaningful—variety in actual prayer and hymn. "Zeus, or by what (other) name you wish to be invoked;" "listen to me, lord, whoever you may be;" "whichever god it may be that lives in this place;" "whether god or goddess:" these

[92] There is only one exception in the available evidence from Dodona and Delphi: P. 267 no. 12 = Lhôte no. 65, τίνας θεῶν as cited above p. 44; cf. also the oracle from Grynion above n. 76). This exception does show that the plural form of expression in itself was not inconceivable.

[93] Cf. also the inscription from Selinous mentioned below (p. 505) with A. Brugnone, L'iscrizione del tempio G di Selinunte e le tradizioni sui responsi oraculari Delfici, in: Sicilia Epigrafica, *ASNP* Ser. IV, Quaderni 1 (Pisa 1999) 129–139, for more oracular responses with lists of gods. Likewise at cultic festivals sacrifice is often made not to one god, but to a whole series of gods. Sometimes the place and function of each of the divine participants can be discovered with some effort, at other times this exercise remains without convincing success, which of course does not necessarily imply that there *was* no system in the plurality. See also Burkert 1985, 217.

[94] Xenophon also adds that he did sacrifice later to the gods whom the god had mentioned *Anab.* 3.1.8. The list must have included Zeus Basileus (*Anab.* 6.1.22, and see below p. 63, with n. 149). The stereotyped answer in the plural can even induce errors in modern translations: Fontenrose 298, Q89 gives as the question in P.-W. 32 "What *gods* should they propitiate…" although the Greek text has: τίνα ἂν θεῶν.

are some common expressions of doubt in Graeco-Roman antiquity.[95] Take for instance the famous pronouncement in Aesch. *Ag.* 160–163:

> Zeus, whoever he is, if this name is welcome to him when he is called by it, by this name do I address him (Ζεύς, ὅστις ποτ' ἐστίν, εἰ τόδ' αὐτῷ φίλον κεκλημένῳ, τοῦτο νιν προσεννέπω).[96]

Commentators[97] agree that at this place the expression does not imply a defective insight into the identity of the deity who is invoked, but is intended to articulate the inscrutable magnitude of the supreme divine power, which cannot be captured in one name.[98] In the present context this is plausible enough. The highest God in particular is frequently addressed with similar formulas of 'philosophical caution' such as "whoever you may be" and "by whatever name I must address you," sometimes specified by disjunctive "either.... either" lists.

The *topos* resounds throughout antiquity. In the fifth century BC, Eur. *Tro.* 885 f.: "whoever you are, you who are hard to know, Zeus (ὅστις ποτ' εἶ σύ, δυστόπαστος εἰδέναι, Ζεύς), whether the Necessity of Nature or the Mind of Mortals, I pray to you...." In the fourth century AD: Julian *Or.* 231A: "O Father Zeus or whatever name pleases

---

[95] Collections and discussions in: C. Ausfeld, De Graecorum precationibus quaestiones, *Jahrb. class. Philol.* Suppl. 28 (1903) 503–547, espec. 518; G. Appel, *De Romanorum precationibus, RVV* VII (Giessen 1909) 75–81 (on Roman evidence of the type *sive quo alio nomine te appellari volueris* and *quisquis es*); Norden 1923=1956, 144 ff.; Keyssner 1932, 47 ff.; J. Pépin, Über das Gebet, in: P. Moraux (ed.), *Frühschriften des Aristoteles* (Darmstadt 1975) 325–350, espec. 328 f.; Pulleyn 1997, 96–115, a revised version of *idem*, The Power of Names in Classical Greek Religion, *CQ* 44 (1994) 15–25.

[96] To my intense relief it is not necessary to go into the *crux interpretum* of the ensuing lines. P.M. Smith, *On the Hymn to Zeus in Aeschylos' Agamemnon* (Chico 1980) 8–19 has a good discussion. But cf. the criticism and the new interpretation by Zajcev 1996.

[97] Sometimes referring to Orphic or Pythagorean philosophical trends as sources of inspiration. Herakleitos' "One thing, the only truly wise, does not and does consent to be called by the name of Zeus" comes close as well.

[98] P. Groeneboom, *Aeschylus' Agamemnon* (Groningen 1944) 151: "indicates that the poet was not able or willing to form an idea of the Father of the gods" (my transl. HSV); W.G. Headlam & G. Thomson, *The Oresteia of Aeschylus* (Cambridge 1938) 23: "Zeus represented a conception of divinity more comprehensive and fundamental than the Zeus of Homeric and Hesiodic tradition;" E. Fraenkel, *Aeschylus Agamemnon* (Oxford 1956) II 100: "'whoever he is' means here not merely the god's name and identity but his real nature and character;" Lloyd Jones 1971, 85: "In this context the use of this invocation has the further effect of laying stress upon the inscrutability of the all-powerful divinity (,...) and thus striking a note of appropriate humility;" Zajcev 1996, with a survey of the various interpretations, decides that it is an expression of the typical Aeschylean idea "des Allgottes."

you and in whatever way you wish to be named" (ὦ Ζεῦ πάτερ ἢ ὅτι σοι φίλον ὄνομα καὶ ὅπως ὀνομάζεσθαι).[99]

However, these formulas are not restricted to the ruler of the universe. Nor would it be wise to disqualify them as mere *literary* tropes. Plato *Cra.* 400 E., an oft quoted passage, provides precious information:

> there is one excellent principle which, as men of sense, we must acknowledge—that of the gods we know nothing, either of their natures or of the names, whatever they may be, by which they call themselves. For it is clear that they use the true names. But there is a second principle, namely to call them, as is customary (νόμος) in prayers, "by whatever name and from whatever provenance you prefer to be called," (οἵτινές τε καὶ ὁπόθεν χαίρουσιν ὀνομαζόμενοι)[100] since we do not know of any other.

The formula is indeed attested for several gods:[101] Eur. *Bacch*. 275 f.: "Demeter Goddess, she is Earth, whichever name you prefer, do call her so" (Δημήτερ Θεά, Γῆ δ' ἐστίν, ὄνομα δ' ὁπότερον βούλῃ κάλει). In Plato *Phlb.* 12C, Socrates says: "and now, as to Aphrodite, in what way it pleases her, so do I address her" (καὶ νῦν τὴν μὲν Ἀφροδίτην, ὅπῃ ἐκείνῃ φίλον, ταύτῃ προσαγορεύω). We have landed here in the sphere of allusion,[102] whence a touch of irony may be involved. However, this

---

[99] More examples for Zeus: Headlam-Thomson (*o.c.* preceding note) 23. E.g. Eur. *HF* 1263: Ζεὺς δ', ὅστις ὁ Ζεύς, οὐ γὰρ οἶδα πλὴν λόγῳ.… See W. Schadewaldt, *Monolog und Selbstgespräch. Untersuchungen zur Formgeschichte der griechischen Tragödie* (Berlin 1926) 115, on the different religious notions in the same formula. Eur. Fr. 912, Ζεὺς εἴτ' Αἴδης ὀνομάζομενος στέργεις, rather concerns the question whether Zeus Chthonios and Hades are the same person or not. Cf. West 1978, *ad* v. 465. Lloyd-Jones 1971, 85 f., tends to downplay the relevance of comparable prior or contemporaneous expressions for Aeschylean philosophy, preserving only Homer and Hesiod as sources of inspiration. Most recently on this: Parker 2009, 154 n. 80.

[100] According to Philostr. *VA* 3.41, Apollonios of Tyana still took part in discussions in which "they handled the problems of sacrifice and of the invocations *in which the gods took pleasure*" (θυσιῶν τε ἥπτοντο καὶ κλήσεων αἷς θεοὶ χαίρουσι). Cf. Men. Rh. II 446.8–9: εἴτε οὖν ταύταις χαίρεις ταῖς προσηγορίαις, εἴτε ἀμείνοσι… But here we are in a different atmosphere as discussed below p. 54 ff.. On the *topos* of divine pleasure in his name and epithets see: Pulleyn 1997, 105.

[101] Not only for gods, at least not in later antiquity. Καὶ ὡς χρηματίζω ("and how I may further be called") is a fixed addition to (sometimes complete) series of names and titles of elite authors of official texts on papyri : cf. LSJ s.v. χρηματίζω III. The expression seems to include both functions and names. Y. Broux, S. Coussements & M. Depauw, καὶ ὡς χρηματίζει and the Importance of Naming in Roman Egypt, *ZPE* 174 (2010) 159–166, propose the interpretation: "and with all the other names and titles with which he normally acts in an official context."

[102] Socrates here disqualifies his opponent's suggestion to equate erotic pleasure with the goddess Aphrodite.

does not detract from its evidential value. Quite to the contrary, application in comedy or, more generally, in the sphere of ironic parody and pun furnishes decisive proof that formulas and expressions were current among large sections of the population, including less educated strata.[103] In Ar. *Ach.* 566, the chorus addresses the general Lamachos as a god, invoking him to appear and help, while adding: εἴτ' ἔστι ταξίαρχος ἢ στρατηγὸς ἢ τειχομάχας ἀνήρ.....[104] In Athen. 8.334B an interlocutor says "the author who wrote the *Kupria*, whether he is some Cyprian or a Statinos or whoever he may like to be called" (ἢ ὅστις δή ποτε χαίρει ὀνομαζόμενος).[105] Both are clear allusions to the prayer formula. Plato, in particular, is fond of these allusive tropes.[106]

What is the function or meaning of these dubitative formulas? In the scholarly discussion these two—function and meaning—have often been identified or rather confused with origin. Long ago Usener argued that their origin was closely connected with the power inherent in the name, knowledge of which implies power over the god.[107] He explains the accumulation of epithets as a strategy to prevent omission or error: "man tut darin lieber des Guten zuviel als daß man sich der Gefahr aussetzt das entscheidende Wort zu übersehen." Generally, in works of the late 19th and early 20th century emphasis has been put on this (magical) power of names and especially on the power that

---

[103] For Greek prayer parody see: Kleinknecht 1937, Horn 1970. For Roman: Guittard 1998, 81 f.

[104] This line does not seem to refer to Lamachos but to another potential saviour. Yet, Kleinknecht 1937, 78, is surely right to take this as a perseveration of the prayer parody. As does Horn 1970, 23 and 53. Cf. S.D. Olson, *Aristophanes Acharnians* (Oxford 2002) 221 f.

[105] Another clear instance of prayer parody in Ar. *Nub.* 269–274. Cf. Kleinknecht 1937, index s.v. εἴτε.

[106] See a collection in Kleinknecht 1937, espec. 130 ff., for the formula "with whatever name you like to be called" as used by Plato. E.g. Pl. *Prt.* 358A εἴτε γὰρ ἡδὺ εἴτε τερπνὸν λέγεις εἴτε χαρτόν, εἴτε ὀπόθεν καὶ ὅπως χαίρεις τὰ τοιαῦτα ὀνομάζων. Also Pépin *o.c.* (above n. 95) 329 n. 11. Plato consistently pictures Socrates as extremely diffident with respect to the correct use of divine names: *Phlb.* 12C; *Cra.* 400D (where, of course, it suits his argument).

[107] Usener 1896, 335 f. "Der Glaube an die Wirksamkeit feierlichen, inbrünstigen Gebets beruht ursprünglich in der Überzeugung, durch die Kraft des Wortes und der Formel den Gott beschwören, seinen Willen bannen und zwingen zu können." On Usener's impact on the search for origins of religious notions and names, see: A. Wessels, *Ursprungszauber. Zur Rezeption von Hermann Useners Lehre von der religiösen Begriffsbildung* (Berlin 2003). More recent demonstrations of the (magical) power of words in Greek rhetorical and medical practice, in: P. Laín Entralgo, *The Therapy of the Word in Classical Antiquity* (New Haven 1970); J. de Romilly, *Magic and Rhetoric in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge Mass. – London 1975); Versnel 2002a.

precise knowledge of the divine name imparted on the expert. Rumpelstilzchen, of course, was an esteemed regular in these arguments. "To know the name of a daemon is to acquire power over him," thus the brief summary by Eduard Fraenkel.[108] The principle is particularly demonstrable in magical practice where it always remained a privileged element.[109]

It would not be prudent, however, to project the allegedly original 'magical' concept of the power of the name onto all later types of prayer addresses.[110] Recent scholarship, justly more cautious concerning references to 'magical' aspects, rather speaks of the fear of offending a deity or failing to attract his attention by using the wrong name.[111] Here the need for precision may entail lack of precision, namely in the suspension of choice: long lists of names or epithets in a demonstrative *embarras du choix*. In a detailed discussion of this issue, Pulleyn, hits the mark with his no-nonsense argument: "You cannot utter a prayer without naming the god to whom it is addressed. Knowledge

---

[108] E. Fraenkel *loc. cit.* (above n. 98). Of course, the power of (secret) divine names is a constitutive element in Neo-Platonic and theurgic theory and practice of Late Antiquity, which, however, falls outside the chronological boundaries of our subject. I have collected literature on this in: Versnel 2002a, n. 33. Add: M. Hirschle, *Sprachphilosophie und Namenmagie im Neuplatonismus* (Beiträge zur Klassischen Philologie 96, Meisenheim 1979). For Orphic Hymns see: Morand 2001, 68–76.

[109] Instead of dubitative or laudatory εἴτε.... εἴτε formulas, magical texts may picture the practitioner as boasting that he does know 'the many names' of a god or demon, as for instance in *PGM* IV 2344: οἶδα σὰ τὰ καλὰ καὶ μεγάλα, Κόρη, ὀνόματα σεμνά. Note, however, that 'dubitative' addresses occur just the same in magical texts, where the practitioner is not sure about which demon he is evoking: δαῖμον ὅστις ποτ' εἶ / *demon quicumque es*: A. Audollent, *Defixionum Tabellae* (Paris 1904) nos. 242, 286. Cf. *ibid*. formulas as *sive quo alio nomine voltis adpellari* (no. 129, cf. no. 196) and F. Graf, Prayer in Magic and Religious Ritual, in: Faraone & Obbink 1991, 188–213, espec. 192. Generally Pulleyn 1997, 111 f. Especially in texts concerning exorcism the knowledge of the name of the demon that causes an illness or of the god who is able to perform this trick is essential: Ch. Stewart, *Demons and the Devil: Moral Imagination in Modern Greek Culture* (Princeton 1991) 213–216.

[110] See the discussion in D. Aubriot, L'invocation au(x) dieu(x) dans la prière grecque: contrainte, persuasion ou théologie? in: Belayche e.a. 2005, 473–490, espec. 474 ff., with a discussion of polyonymy at pp. 482–486.

[111] One for all: Gwyn Griffitihs 1975, 119 f. "Knowing his correct name is vitally important: *nomen numen*. It was then essential to specify the function of the deity which was most suited to respond to the particular request which the petitioner had in mind. Here an anxiety not to overlook the exactly relevant function often led to an expression of uncertainty which might seem to apply even to the identity of the god invoked."

of the name is a prerequisite to any form of communication.[112] There need not be anything magical about it."[113] But this does not affect—still less resolve—the central problem of how you can be sure to know the correct (= effective) name of a/the god. When Pulleyn adds: "I do not understand why it is thought that one had to 'discover' the name of the god," we should at least seriously consider Plato's answer implied in the passage cited above about the customary prayer formulas. Here the formula is unequivocally placed in the context of human lack of insight into divine prosopography. Even fully acknowledging its rhetorical function in the *Kratylos*,[114] we cannot ignore this interpretation, by a Greek for Greeks, of the dubitative prayer formula. In other words, even if we are ready to dismiss the idea that knowing the name of a god implies having power over that god, this should not make us forget that knowing the name is an absolute condition for getting access to the divine *source* of power. The final goal is not to *discover* the name of a god (although this may occur as well) but to *choose* the contextually appropriate name. And, evidently, Greeks did not consider this a trivial dilemma.[115]

All this is not to deny that these formulas tended to move from the sphere of doubt to that of praise. In earlier hymnic texts, the majority of lists of names consist of the god's toponymic epithets. The author's (pretended) doubt about the 'correct name' enables him to flatter the god with long strings of titles under which he is worshipped in

---

[112] He was preceded in this formula by Arnobius, *Adv. Haer.* 3.42 *omnis enim qui quaerit alicuius numinis impetrare responsum debeat necessario scire cui supplicat.*

[113] Pulleyn 1997, 96–115, espec. 97. One motive for his emphatic rejection of *any* compulsory implication in prayer is his central concept of *charis,* which, being an act of reciprocity, in his view dominates the communication between god and men and thus not allows for compulsion. This is good as far as it goes. Rather far here and in R. Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City-state* (Oxford 1994); just far enough in R.C.T. Parker, Pleasing Thighs: Reciprocity in Greek Religion, in: C. Gill *et alii* (edd.), *Reciprocity in Ancient Greece* (Oxford 1998) 105–125. Cf. also: W.H. Race, Aspects of Rhetoric and Form in Greek Hymns, *GRBS* 23 (1982) 5–14, espec. 8 ff.; É. Scheid-Tissinier, Recevoir des dieux, donner aux dieux: aspects de la relation avec le divin dans la poésie grecque archaïque, *RPh* 74 (2000) 199–230.

[114] Cf. on the theory of names in the *Cratylus*: T.M.S. Baxter, *The Cratylus: Plato's Critique of Naming* (Leiden 1992); R. Barney, *Names and Nature in Plato's Cratylus* (New York – London 2001). On the names of gods in the etymological section see most recently: B. Anceschi, *Die Götternamen in Platons Kratylos. Ein Vergleich mit dem Papyrus von Derveni* (Studien zur klassischen Philologie, 158, Frankfurt am Main 2007).

[115] Note Pulleyn's own sensible modifications of his initial wholesale rejection of the quest for the (correct) name, *ibid.* 106 f.

different cult centres. Cult centres are the visible testimonies of the god's supreme power.[116] Already in archaic literature, to begin with Hesiod,[117] terms like *polyonymos*, 'with many names', function as pearls in the crown of praise. In the Classical period they are no less popular. For instance, Soph. Fr. 941, 2, praises (Aphrodite) Kupris as πολλῶν ὀνομάτων ἐπώνυμος.[118] Significant again is its prevalence in ironic contexts. In Ar. *Plut.* 1164, Hermes, who has just listed his own names and epithets, is jokingly lauded: "How marvellous to have many names (πολυωνυμίας)." In Callim. *H.Artemis* 7 f., Artemis asks her father Zeus: "Grant me to keep my virginity for ever, daddy, and to be of many names (πολυωνυμίην), that Phoebus may not sneeringly contend with me."[119]

These expressions gain impetus in the Hellenistic and Roman eras and tend to expand into long aretalogical praises, notably in the cult of Isis.[120] The prayer to Isis in Apuleius *Met.* 11.2 exemplarily summarizes the fixed scheme of numerous hymnic prayers: "Whether thou art Ceres,…or heavenly Venus,….or the sister of Phoebus,….or Proserpina"……"by whatever name or ceremony or visage it is right to address thee" (*quoquo nomine, quoquo ritu, quaqua facie te fas*

---

[116] As is expressed in countless expressions such as "you who rule over (μέδεις, κατέχεις)….." and variants. See: Keyssner 1937, 75–79. The same holds for Egyptian and Hebrew prayers: A. Barucq, *L'expression de la louange divine et de la prière dans la Bible et en Egypte* (Cairo 1962) 22 ff. and *passim*. Ovid *Met.* 4.11–21 is exemplary in listing epithets of Dionysos, while first adding *et quae praeterea per Graias plurima gentes nomina, Liber, habes*, and then continuing with his great conquests: India etc.

[117] Hes. *Th.* 785; *H.Apollo* 82; *H.Demeter* 18. See: Richardson 1974 *ad loc.* for discussion of the term and literature. Usener 1896, 334 n. 7, gives already a survey of the evidence. Cf. Keyssner 1937, 47 ff. and see below n. 122 on *myrionymos*.

[118] Cf. Serv. *Aen.* 2.251; Apul. *Met.* 11.2.

[119] See F. Bornmann, *Callimachi Hymnus in Dianam* (Firenze 1968) *ad. loc.* for further evidence. Centuries later her wish is fulfilled in a hymn from Samos where the goddess is invoked with the epithet πολυώνυμος (*IG* XII.6.2, no. 604, 3rd c. AD).

[120] Not only in Isis cult though, as we shall see shortly in the case of Apollo Smintheios. Cf. e.g. the Naassene hymn to Attis: E. Heitsch, *Die griechischen Dichterfragmente der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Göttingen 1961) 156 no. 2, to be read with Von Wilamowitz' unbeatably acidulous comments (on colleagues) in *Hermes* 37 (1902) 329–332. Another beautiful example is a verse-inscription from Hierapolis (late 2nd c. AD). Scholars have generally overlooked "la poésie si remarquable de Hiérapolis:" L. Robert, *La déesse de Hiérapolis Castabala* (Paris 1964) 51 ff., espec. 53 n. 2. Generally on accumulative formulas: M. Foucault, *The Order of Things* (London 1970) XVI: "The mere act of enumeration has a power of enchantment all its own." Cf. R. Gordon, 'What's in a list?' Listing in Greek and Graeco-Roman malign magical texts, in: Jordan *e.a.* 1999, 239–278.

est invocare).[121] Isis owed one of her fixed epithets, *murionymos,* to the enormous variety of her names.[122] Hence a hymn says of her and her spouse Sarapis: "You are two, but you have many names among mankind."[123]

With this, however, we find ourselves faced with a later and different phenomenon which we will discuss more extensively in Chapter III: the syncretistic tendency that is typical of one particular type of henotheism. Isis, as the central deity, is identified with—or rather absorbs—other great goddesses in distant countries.[124] In the late third century AD, Menander Rhetor still recommends both strategies—the old Greek one and the later Hellenistic one—for epideictic praises of the god Apollo Sminthios:

> By what names shall I address you? Some call you Lydian, some Delian, some Ascraean, some Actian. The Spartans call you Amyclaean, the Athenians Patroos, the Milesians Branchiate. You control every city and land and nation. You control the whole inhabited earth (…). The Persians call you Mithras, the Egyptians Horus, the Thebans Dionysos, the

---

[121] See the extensive commentary by Griffiths 1975. Other samples of this type of 'either…either' accumulations in Isis aretalogies *i.a. POxy* 1380; *The Isiac Hymn of Isidorus* (Totti 1985 no. 21); V. Vanderlip, *The Four Greek Hymns of Isidorus and the Cult of Isis* (Toronto 1972) 55.

[122] Occurrence of this epithet: Versnel 1990, 50 n. 32; L. Bricault, Isis Myrionyme, in: *Hommages à Jean Leclant*, *BdE* 106 (Caire 1994) 67–86; *idem, Myrionymi: les épiclèses grecques d'Isis, de Sarapis et d'Anubis* (Stuttgart 1996) 53 f.; 86 f. R. MacMullen 1981, 90 f. with n. 57, has a good discussion on the concepts behind words like *myrionymous* and *polyonymous* in the Roman period. For classical Greece see: D. Aubriot, *o.c.* (above n. 110*)*. Note that in the (late) Orphic hymns the vocative *polyonyme* figures side by side with other epithets of 14 different deities (Mussies 1988, 17; Morand 2001, 73, with n. 154). Understandably so: some Orphic hymns consist nearly exclusively of long lists of epithets. On the function of this accumulation: M. Hopman-Govers, Les jeux des épithètes dans les *Hymnes Orphiques, Kernos* 14 (2001) 35–49. The epithet was (of course) duly inherited by the holy Virgin, as were so many other features of Greek/Hellenistic goddesses. See: Borgeaud 1996 (tr. *Mother of the Gods: From Cybele to the Virgin Mary* [Baltimore 2004]), who views the Virgin Mary as just one more complex representation of 'the Mother.'

[123] Y. Grandjean, *Une nouvelle arétalogie d'Isis à Maronée* (Leiden 1975) v. 19. This idea, too, is anticipated in classical Greek texts: Aesch. *PV* 209 f., Θέμις καὶ Γαῖα πολλῶν ὀνομάτων μόρφη μία.

[124] This is not the same as the older custom to equate one Greek god with one foreign god as best known from Herodotus, on which Burkert 1990; Harrison 2000, 208–222. Early elements of 'syncretistic' tendencies may rather be recognized in aretalogical formulas of omnipotence such as in *H.Aphrodite* 31–2: "In all the temples of the gods she has a share of honour, and among all mortal men she is chief of the goddesses," and compare Hes. *Th.* 413–417 on Hekate. For the sense in which I am using the term 'syncretistic' I refer to the good brief discussion in Allan 2004, 116–120.

> Delphians honour you by the double name of Apollo and Dionysos (…)
> The Chaldaeans call you the leader of the stars.[125]

Here all the characteristics of these polyonomastic strategies converge: Gods may be praised with a choice of topographical epithets (even if the god is from the outset marked himself as a local deity by such an *epiklesis*: Smintheus). The deity may also be equated or identified with foreign great gods. In either case there is no doubt about the initial identity of the invoked god. Menander stipulates that it is all intended as a hymnic expression of the god's worldwide sovereignty.[126] As such they are typically henotheistic expressions.[127]

We must conclude that identical expressions of *embarras du choix* may be applied for different purposes and in different functions and even meanings. The worst you can do is to shackle everything in one universal straightjacket. The Greeks, at any rate, did not. Nor, for that matter, did the Romans. The Roman prayer formulas excel[128] in expressions such as *quisquis es* or *sive quo alio nomine te appellari volueris* and especially *sive… sive* formulas.[129] The latter is so stereotyped that

---

[125] D.A. Russel & N.G. Wilson, *Menander Rhetor* (Oxford 1981), Treatise II, 445. 26 ff. Compare 438.11 ff. "Sminthian Apollo, how should we address thee? As the sun? Or as the Mind as the theologians say…? As the Creator of the Universe or as the Second Power?" On the final part see: E. Krentz, The Prayer in Menander Rhetor 2.445.25–446.13, in: M. Kiley *et al.* (edd.), *Prayer from Alexander to Constantine. A Critical Anthology* (London – New York 1997) 185–189. Generally: J.M. Bremer, Menander Rhetor on Hymns, in: J.G.J. Abbenes *e.a.* (edd.), *Greek Literary Theory after Aristotle. A Collection of Papers in Honour of D.M. Schenkeveld* (Amsterdam 1995) 259–274.

[126] As an earlier colleague of his summarized: "If, then, a god is worshipped by all, this is the greatest praise" (Alexander Rhetor, in: *Rhetores Graeci* III, 4–6, of Hadrianic times). For a discussion of formulas of praise to gods, see: J. Amann, *Die Zeusrede des Ailios Aristeides* (Suttgart 1931) 1–14.

[127] Versnel 1990, Chapters I and III. See below, Ch. III pp. 300 f.

[128] So much so, that some scholars see this as typical of the Roman religion *in opposition to* the Greek one, either (as *e.g.* Guittard 1998; Alvar 1985) due to the specific nature of the Roman gods (on which see the mise au point by Guittard 1998; D. Elm, Die Kontroverse über die 'Sondergötter', in: *ARG* 5 [2003] 67–79; M. Perfigli, *Indigitamenta: Divinità funzionali e funzionalità divina nella religione Romana* [Pisa 2004]) or, as Pulleyn 1997, 100–105, who tends to explain the Roman wealth of dubitative expressions by a typically Roman legalistic approach, while explaining (away) the Greek formulas differently.

[129] Appel 1909, 75–81 has collected the material. Cf. Guittard 1998, 75 f.

the expression *sive deus, sive dea*[130] on a series of cippi[131] and in the Acta Fratrum Arvalium[132] even seems to amalgamate into a new name of one deity,[133] which should be written with a capital: *Sivedeussivedea*. Doubt deified.

The latter expression is often adduced as an obvious Roman parallel[134] to the ultimate Greek manifestation of uncertainty, viz. the altar "for an Unknown God" (ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ) at Athens, which offered such a convenient platform for Paul's preaching.[135] Diogenes Laert. I.110 tells us that even to his day "altars with no name" (βωμοὶ ἀνώνυμοι) could be found in Athens, while his contemporary Philostratos *VA* 6.3. praises the Athenians for setting up altars for unknown gods (καὶ ἀγνώστων δαιμόνων βωμοὶ ἵδρυνται). The latter expression, added to the scanty epigraphical evidence,[136] suggests that the authentic dedi-

---

[130] Oldest literary attestation: Cato *Agr.* 139. Arnobius *Adv. nat.* 3.8 explains the expression as *dubitationis exceptio*. See: Appel 1909, 80 f. The complete dossier in Alvar 1985. Cf. R. Mancini, Deo-Deae nelle iscrizioni di Roma, *Tituli* 2 (1980) 173–178. J. Bérato & J. Gascou, Sive deo sive deae? À propos d'une inscription de Cassis (Bouches-du-Rhône), *ZPE* 137 (2001) 255–259, argue convincingly that the letters S D S D at the end of a votive inscription for the goddess Tutela must be understood as *sive deo sive deae*. A recent attestation of a similar doubt concerning gender from the mouth of a Greek peasant: "I'm not sure whether the devil is a he or a she, I guess a he" (Blum & Blum 1970, 99).

[131] Degrassi, *ILLRP* I 291–3 with commentary. The expression is typical of *evocatio* ritual: Plin. *NH* 28.18; Macr. *Sat.* 3.9.7. See: R.E.A. Palmer, *Roman Religion and Roman Empire* (Philadelphia 1974) 236 n. 318; J. Le Gall in: *Mélanges Heurgon* I (Paris 1976) 519–524; J. Alvar, La fórmula de la evocatio y su presencía en contextos desacralizadores, *Archivo español de arqueologia* 57 (1984) 143–148.

[132] J. Scheid, *Commentarii Fratrum Arvalium qui supersunt* (Roma Antica 4, Paris-Rome 1998) index s.v. *sive*.

[133] This becomes particularly apparent in the lists with sacrifices such as: *Marti arietes duos, Iunoni deae Diae oves duas, sive deo sive deae oves duas.*

[134] Alvar 1985, 269: "On peut affirmer qu'il y a une très grande affinité entre cette formula et l'*agnostos theos*, le 'dieu inconnu' grec qui eut son propre culte, comme divinité indépendante qu'il fallait vénérer. La formulation même: *sive deus sive dea/ agnostos theos* rend évident l'abîme existant entre la capacité d'abstraction conceptuelle des Grecs et celle des Romains."

[135] Still important: Norden 1923, espec. 115–124, to be read with Weinreich's review of the first edition in: *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* 34 (1913) 49–64 (= *Ausgew. Schr.* I, 221–236) and O. Weinreich, *De dis ignotis quaestiones selectae* (Habilitationsschrift Halle 1914 = *Ausgew. Schr.* I, 250–298). The most important recent treatments are by P.W. van der Horst, The Altar of 'the Unknown God' in Athens (Acts 17:23) and the Cult of 'Unknown Gods' in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods, *ANRW* II.18.2. (1989) 1426–1456 and Henrichs 1994. Brief introductions: P.W. van der Horst, The Unknown God, in: R. van den Broek *et alii* (edd.), *Knowledge of God in the Graeco-Roman World* (Leiden 1991) 19–42; *idem*, Unknown God, in: *DDD* 1664–1670, where one can find more literature.

[136] Extensive discussion in Van der Horst *oo.cc.* preceding note.

cations were in the plural, as is also explicitly asserted by Jerome.[137] They need not all have referred to one and the same category of gods. Chthonian gods of the Netherworld may very well qualify as they are often referred to as *anonymoi*,[138] but they may equally well be counterparts of the Roman anonymous gods of the *sive deus sive dea* type, who, according to Aul. Gell. 2.28.2–3, were propitiated after an earthquake "since it was uncertain what force and which of the gods or goddesses had caused the earthquake" (*quoniam et qua vi et per quem deorum dearumve tremeret incertum esset*).[139]

The latter case, at any rate, clearly betrays either the fear of erring in the selection of the correct god or the correct name, or, more generally, a total lack of insight concerning the identity of the god involved. As we have seen, this is not necessarily so in all expressions of doubt or choice that we discussed. Even so, theological suspension often glimmers through in various expressions.

The types of incongruities and uncertainties pictured in the three sections above, are largely, if perhaps only vaguely, known among students of ancient Greek culture. Yet, it is hard to avoid the impression that only few of them are able to resist the temptation to suppress, forget or smooth over these irritating little scratches on the golden image of our orderly classic Greek culture. To quote Vernant once again: "How could these men, whose exacting rigor in the realms of intellectual consistency is extolled, have lived their religious life in a kind of chaos?" My suggestion, conversely, would be that this first encounter with gods of dubious identities and with questions of theological doubt should rather invite us to follow Socrates' own words (Pl. *Phlb*. 12 C): "In the matter of names of gods my fear is beyond human measure, nothing indeed makes me so afraid." In many respects the issue of divine names appears to be a far more disquieting problem than we tend to realize or acknowledge. And with this introduction

---

[137] Hieron. *Comm. in Ep. ad Titum 1.12* = PL 26.607: "The altar inscription is not, as Paul asserted, 'To an unknown god' but as follows: 'To the gods of Asia, Europe, and Africa, to the unknown and foreign gods." Cf. *Ep*. 70.

[138] So especially Henrichs 1994 and *idem*, Namenlosigkeit und Euphemismus: Zur Ambivalenz der chthonischen Mächte im altattischen Drama, in: H. Hofmann (ed.), *Fragmenta Dramatica: Beiträge zur Interpretation der griechischen Tragiker-fragmente und ihrer Wirkungsgeschichte* (Göttingen) 161–201.

[139] See the three options as presented by Van der Horst 1989, 1451. Extensively on these gods in connection with earthquakes: G.H. Walherr, *Erdbeben. Das aussergewöhnliche Normale* (Stuttgart 1997) 231–239. Pötscher 2000, 41 f. takes the *anonymoi theoi* as another expression of the concern to honour all the gods.

we have not even touched on the most alarming complexities. It is the very topic of polyonymy that will lead us *in medias res*.

2. *Names and surnames: one god or many?*

Doubts about the identity of an appearing god, hesitation concerning the question which god should be approached in precarious circumstances, uncertainty about the correctness of given names, so far our first encounter with implications and complications of Greek polytheism. An alarming plethora of gods to begin with. Their numbers seem to be liable to infinite multiplication as a result of a peculiar phenomenon that we have come across in passing. *If* Nausicaa had been a goddess and *if* Odysseus' guess had been correct, that would have been the end of the story: Homeric theology knows only one Artemis. The case of the Lycaonians is different: their Zeus and Hermes were *not* the same as the ancient Greek ones or so it seems. Must we, in consequence, assume a coexistence of several different Zeuses, several Hermeses?

The epithet and other identifiers

It is time to complicate matters a bit further. The best way to broach the problem that emerges here is to take our departure from the notion expressed by the term epithet (from Greek *epitheton*, also *epiklesis*), an until recently[140] curiously neglected chapter in the study of Greek religion.[141] Greek gods, as we saw, were occasionally exalted as being *poly-*

---

[140] The text of this section as presented here was for the greater part written years before I gave the lectures. Recently there has been a remarkable increase in studies and discussions on divine epithets. There is much of interest in the two volumes of *Les panthéons des cités*, edited by Motte 1998 and Pirenne-Delforge 1998 respectively. Important in particular: R.C.T. Parker in his M.P. Nilsson lecture, 'The Problem of the Greek Cult Epithet', *Opuscula Atheniensia* 28 (2003) 173–183, with detailed and informative discussion and bibliography. He argues that the cult epithet system intertwines two principal functions, those of selecting the relevant aspects of a deity, and of individuating cult sites on earth. Precisely where he ends his paper with a quick note on the unity of the divine figure behind the epithets, my present argument begins. Most recently appeared the important comprehensive collection of Belayche *et alii* 2005. I feel relieved that these more recent studies did not force me to make any change of importance in what I had written, but instead did a lot to corroborate it.

[141] "Die Epiklesenforschung steckt in den Kinderschuhen," thus: A. Henrichs, *Die Götter Griechenlands. Ihr Bild im Wandel der Religionswissenschaft.* Thyssen Vorträge "Auseinandersetzungen mit der Antike" (Bamberg 1987) 42 n. 59. Cf. recently Parker 2003, 175: "Perhaps the extraordinary infrequency, amid all the huge literature that exists on Greek religion, of theoretical discussions of the cult epithet as a category, is

onymous ("of many names"). In fact, practically all Greek gods were entitled to that qualification due to the fact that, in prayer, ritual and literature, they were referred to with a variety of predicates and surnames.[142] These epithets, as far as they are transparent, generally refer to specific functions, qualities, rituals, genealogy, and above all places of origin and residence (ὁπόθεν χαίρουσιν ὀνομαζόμενοι). Let us take a look at this phenomenon, which is so typical of Greek polytheism.

In the festive calendar of the small Attic community of Erchia[143] Apollo[144] is honoured under no fewer than six different epithets—

---

the product of a suspicion that there is indeed nothing illuminating to be said except about particular examples."

[142] C.H.F. Bruchmann, *Epitheta deorum quae apud poetas Graecos leguntur*, *RML* Suppl. 7.1 (1893) (only literary sources); Rudhardt 1958, 90–100; L. Gernet, in: L. Gernet & A. Boulanger, *Le génie grec dans la religion* (Paris 1970 = 1932) 221–231; Gladigow 1975; 1981; Burkert 1985, 184; Graf 1985, *passim*; *idem*, Namen von Göttern im klassischen Altertum, *Handbuch der Namenforschung* (Berlin – New York 1995); A. Chaniotis, 'Epiklese' in: *NP* (1997) 1117–1121; Brulé 1998; Parker 2003. On the use of epithets in Pausanias: Pirenne-Delforge 1998, 140–147; *eadem* 2008, 263–271. For epithets in a modern polytheism see e.g.: Christian 1972.

[143] *SEG* 21.541; *LSCG* no. 18. See: G. Daux, La grande démarchie: un nouveau calendrier sacrificiel d'Attique (Erchia), *BCH* 87 (1963) 603–634; S. Dow, The Greater Demarkhia of Erkhia, *BCH* 89 (1965) 180–213; Humphreys 2004, 177–188. Of course, similar varieties of names and epithets occur in other cult calendars, collected by S. Dow, Six Athenian sacrificial calendars, *BCH* 92 (1968) 170–186. Cf. J. Mikalson, Religion in the Attic Demes, *AJPh* 98 (1977) 424–435; Humphreys 2004, 145–188. The earliest one, the calendar from Thorikos (c. 430 BC), though known before through inadequate manuscripts, was published from the stone after these publications: G. Daux, *AC* 52 (1983) 150–174. Improvements by S. Scullion, Three Notes on Attic Sacrificial Calendars, *ZPE* 121 (1998) 116–122. R.C.T. Parker, Festivals of the Attic Demes, in: T. Linders-Nordquist 1987, 137–147, focusses on the Thorikos calendar. Text, commentary and bibliography in *NGSL* no. 1; Humphreys 2004, 155–165. D. Lambert, who contributed 'The Sacrificial Calendar of the Marathonian Tetrapolis: A Revised Text', *ZPE* 130 (2000) 43–70 (and see *ibid.* 71–80), is preparing a monograph edition of all Attic sacrificial Calendars.

[144] To take one of the greater gods amongst the many. Another *polyonymos* in the same calendar is Zeus. He is mentioned twice without epithet, and further has the epithets: Meilichios, Polieus, Epoptes, Epakrios, Teleios, Horios. Apollo and Zeus are the most prominent gods in other calendars as well (see: Mikalson 1983, 70 f.). The other gods are less lavishly provided, which, of course, is not necessarily indicative of their general wealth or dearth of epithets. In Pausanias alone, for instance, one counts 59 epithets of Athena (Loeb ed. V. index p.206). It is true, though, that Zeus seems to dwarf all other gods. For Zeus in Athens cf. R.E. Wycherley, The Olympieion at Athens, *GRBS* 5 (1964) 161–179, espec. his "Synopsis of Zeus Cults at Athens," 175 ff. For a full list of epithets of Zeus see: H. Schwabl, Zeus RE X A (1972) 253–376 = *idem, Zeus* (Munich 1978). Quite a few epithets have only a single attestation and new epithets emerge regularly, especially in inscriptions from Asia Minor. See: H. Schwabl, Zum Kult des Zeus in Kleinasien, in: G. Dobesch & G. Rehrenböck (edd.), *Die epigraphische und altertumskundliche Erforschung Kleinasiens: hundert Jahre Kleinasiatische*

Pythios, Lukeios, Delphinios, Apotropaios, Pagion, Nymphegetes—on different days and with different sacrifices. How are we to value divine epithets? As a device for making a distinction between two different but homonymous gods, or as indications of different manifestations, functions or aspects of one and the same god? It is amazing how rashly many modern observers tend to take the latter option for granted,[145] or just disregard the whole question as a *quantité négligeable*.[146] I would propose to try taking the dilemma seriously—a dilemma, moreover, that counts among the most interesting, typical and meaningful in the field of Greek polytheistic conceptualization, and not only because *both* viewpoints can be persuasively defended.

Different or the same? While bearing the same 'first name', Zeus Olympios (or Zeus Basileus), the great king of heavens, so blatantly differs from Zeus Meilichios, a decidedly chthonian character often portrayed as a snake,[147] that, as has often been observed, they can hardly be understood as two different manifestations of one and the

---

Kommission der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Ergänzungsbände zu den *Tituli Asiae Minoris* 14) 329–338. However, for cult calendars the general rule is phrased by E.R. Dodds, 'The Religion of the Ordinary Man in Classical Greece', in: *The Ancient Concept of Progress* (Oxford 1973) 140–155, espec. 153: ''nearly half of the sacrifices listed are offered to no Olympian deity but to a menagerie of heroes, daemons, and obscure godlings."

[145] This is a typical example of the risk, as J.S. Helfer, On Method in the History of Ideas, *H&T* Beiheft 8 (1968) 1–7, wrote, that "our conclusions are too frequently functions of what we assume to be limits of understanding," a scholarly tendency that we will discuss later *inter alia* in reaction to a statement by Sourvinou-Inwood 1990 = 2000a, 18: "The gods who were worshipped in the different *poleis* were, of course, perceived to be the same gods (cf. also Hdt. 5.92–3). What differed was the precise articulation of the cult, its history, its particular modalities, which aspect of each deity each city chose to emphasize.…" What I wish to (re-)consider in the present chapter concerns two elements of this statement, viz. "of course" and "were perceived." The latter expression, for instance, necessarily evokes the question "perceived by whom?" (Hdt 5.92–3, incidentally, is far from proving her point. See below p. 105 with n. 301).

[146] Even those who admit the problem and accept a basic differentiation between various homonymous gods always hasten to add that "essentially" they remain one and the same god. See some examples below n. 177 f.

[147] Which does not mean that any snake depicted in painting or relief should represent Zeus Meilichios. On this god the most comprehensive study still is: A.B. Cook, *Zeus. A Study in Ancient Religion* II. *Zeus of the Dark Sky* (Cambridge 1925) 1091–1160. A full collection and good discussion of the epigraphic evidence in: Jameson *et alii* 1993, 81–103 (with snakes representing Zeus Ktesios, Zeus Philios and Agathodaemon at pp. 94 f.). A new view of the god's nature mainly based on epigraphic evidence: N. Cusumano, Zeus Meilichios, *Mythos* 3 (1991) 19–47; *idem*, Polivalenze funzionali e figurative. Osservazioni su Zeus Meilichios, *Mètis* n.s. 4 (2006) 165–195. Attic cults and shrines are collected by G.V. Lalonde, *Horos Dios: An Athenian Shrine and Cult of Zeus* (Leiden 2006), Appendix 103–120.

same god.[148] They may even play radically opposite roles on the same historical stage. Xenophon during his Persian expedition enjoyed the constant beneficial support of Zeus Basileus (*Anab.* 3.1.12; 6.1.22), whereas Zeus Meilichios[149] persecuted him because Xenophon, as he found out too late, had failed to sacrifice a holocaust to him (*Anab.* 7.8.4).[150] To complicate matters, a recent find reveals that, at least locally, cults of several *different* Meilichioi, even devoid of the name Zeus,[151] occurred.[152]

---

[148] Something similar can be said about the Roman Iuppiter and his chthonian counterpart Veiovis (a name that, like Iuppiter, contained the element *-iov-*). Apart from being a 'subterranean Zeus', Zeus Katachthonios or Chthonios was also a name of Hades (Hom. *Il.* 9.4.57). When mention is made of 'another Zeus' (Aesch. *Suppl.* 231) or 'the hospitable Zeus of the departed' (Aesch. *Suppl.* 156) this always refers to Hades.

[149] How very difficult it is for the modern reader to accept as much as *the possibility* that the Zeus Meilichios mentioned at this place (on whom see: O. Lendel, *Kommentar zu Xenophons Anabasis* [Darmstadt 1995] *ad loc.*), even despite the entirely different type of sacrifice, simply *may be* a god different from Zeus Basileus, exemplarily appears in the Loeb edition by C.L. Brownson. Although he translates correctly: "Xenophon replied that he had not sacrificed *to that god*" (τούτῳ τῷ θεῷ, as opposed to the other god Zeus Basileus), he helpfully both corrects the author and misleads the reader by commenting "i.e. Zeus in this particular one of his functions, as 'the Merciful'." Just so, but more explicitly Sourvinou-Inwood, below p. 519.

[150] This clash between these two homonymous gods has often been noticed, most recently by Parker 2003, 182. Pulleyn 1997, 98, considers the possibility that Xenophon ignored one god by mispronouncing his name, but fortunately rejects this suggestion. Vernant 1980, 99, who also paid attention to the inconsistency between the opposing forces of two Zeuses (actually three: also Zeus Soter), does not view it as incompatible with his principle of unity. See his statements below p. 70 with n. 177.

[151] On the possible implications of the use of the epithet on its own see e.g. Graf 1985, 39: who, on the ground that exactly for chthonian characters of Zeus often the mere epiklesis is used, surmises that behind the epiklesis a figure hides that so much differs from the conventional image of Zeus that it easily became an autonomous independent god. However, in contemporaneous inscriptions one finds both names side by side, which suggests that the Greeks did not experience them as incompatible. On the problems concerning the origin of epithets or predicates that occur separately as genuine divine names (Eubouleus, Trophonios etc.) see: Graf *ibid.* 38.

[152] In the, now famous, *lex sacra* from Selinous (460–450 BC) (Jameson *e.a.* 1993; *NGSL* no. 28, with recent literature; a different—but not more convincing—interpretation: N. Robertson, *Religion and Reconciliation in Greek Cities: The Sacred Laws of Selinus and Cyrene* [Oxford/New York 2010]) we find a (Zeus?) Meilichios (in the plot) of Muskos and a (Zeus?) Meilichios (in the plot) of Euthydamos. Jameson *e.a.* 1993, 28, argue that Myskos and Euthydamos are the names of men who had established important gentilicial groups whose cults of Meilichios had become significant for a wider section of the community. Cf. A. Brugnone, Riti di purificazione a Selinunte, *Kokalos* 45 (1999 [2003]) 11–26, and A. Robu, Le culte de Zeus Meilichios à Sélinonte et la place des groupements familiaux et pseudo-familiaux dans la colonisation mégarienne, in: Brulé 2009, 277–291. Most recently appeared an exhaustive study: C. Grotta, *Zeus Meilichios a Selinunte* (Roma 2010). These gentilicial cults call to mind

That I am not paradigmatically induced to raise questions that far transcend the imagination of ancient Greeks—thus violating the codes of decent historical inquiry—can be demonstrated with samples of similar interests, questions and answers in antiquity. C. Aurelius Cotta, the champion of the Academic school of philosophy in Cic. *ND* 3.21 ff.,[153] scorns "certain (Greek) theologians" (*ii qui theologi nominantur*) who had figured out that there are three different gods with the name Zeus, two of them born in Arcadia, the third in Crete, whose tomb is shown on that island, their distinctions grounded on topographical and genealogical arguments.[154] In this type of literature there is a proliferation of lists of gods that shelter different personae under one name: four different Vulcani, five different gods named Hermes and so on.

Are these nothing more than theoretical constructions? How far can we trust theologians? To go by Cicero, just as far as you can throw them and everybody knows how far a theologian—ancient or modern—can be thrown. Here is a Christian theologian, Minucius Felix, who in his *Octavius* 22.5, after derisively listing different Dianae (Diana pictured as a huntress, Diana Ephesia with many breasts, Diana Trivia with three heads) and Ioves (Iupiter Ammon with horns, Capitolinus with a lightning, Latiaris sprinkled with blood, etc.), ends up with the firm conclusion:

---

the much later cults for Gods owing their epithets to the founders of the cult in Asia Minor. E.g. in Lydia: Μὴν Ἀρτεμιδώρου, Μὴν Τιάμου, in Phrygia: Ζεὺς Τρωσου, and other gods in different regions. See index *TAM* V.1; P. Herrmann & K.Z. Polatkan, Das Testament des Epikrates und andere neue Inschriften aus dem Museum von Manisa, *Sitzber. Ak. Wien* 265 (1969) 58–60; F. Gschnitzer, Eine persische Kultstiftung in Sardeis und die 'Sippengötter' Vorderasiens, in: W. Meid & H. Trenkwalder (edd.), *Im Bannkreis des alten Orients. Studien zur Sprach- und Kulturgeschichte des Alten Orients und seines Ausstrahlungsraumes, Karl Oberhuber zum 70. Geburtstag gewidmet* (Innsbruck 1986) 45–54; M. Ricl, Nouveaux monuments votifs de Phrygie, *EA* 17 (1991) 76 f.; S. Hübner, Spiegel und soziale Gestaltungskraft alltäglicher Lebenswelt: Der Kult des Men in Lydien und Phrygien, in: E. Schwertheim & E. Winter (edd.), *Religion und Region: Götter und Kulte aus dem östlichen Mittelmeerraum* (Bonn 2003), 179–200, espec. 188 ff. Cf. EBGR 2000, 108 and 2003, 31.

[153] And he is not the only one. Kallimachos, for instance, *Hymn to Zeus* 6–7 preceded him.

[154] Clem. Al. *Protrepticus* 28.1–3, counts three Zeuses, five Athenas, and six Apollones. Pausanias 4.33.1 tells us that he could not name all the places where Zeus was said to be born or raised. Theophilos, *ad Autolycum,* 1.10, in his enquiry of "how many kinds of Zeus there are', already relied on a semi-alphabetical list of his numerous *epikleseis*.

> In order not to dwell excessively on these many Ioves: there are as many 'monsters[155] of Iuppiter' as there are names (*et ne longius multos Ioves obeam, tot sunt Iovis monstra quot nomina*).[156]

But how about 'normal' Greeks? Can they be so confused as to have dozens of different gods with the same names?

In order to show that the notion is not as far-fetched as it may seem at first sight, let us cast a glance at contemporary *de facto* polytheism.[157] I must hasten to stress that I am interested in *analogies* in the domain of the conceivable or the inconceivable in ideas relevant to our topic—since "analogy comforts conjecture" (R. MacMullen)[158]—, *not* in issues of continuity or tradition. I am fully aware of—and to a certain extent share—recent distrust concerning the rationale of both '*the* Mediterranean' as an all-embracing and coherent concept[159] and, more especially, of the issue of continuity, including its relevance to the conceptual framework of ancient Greek culture.[160]

---

[155] 'Monster' here in the same derogatory sense as in *monstrum hominis, mulieris:* "a monster of a man, of a woman."

[156] Quite a different view in Augustine *C.D.* 7.11, where he lists a long string of epithets of Iuppiter and then comments: "They have assigned these *cognomina* to one god for different reasons, on account of different powers; nevertheless, they did not compel him to be as many gods as they had justifications for names."

[157] I borrow the term '*de facto* polytheism' from R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, 'Polytheism' in *ER* 11 (1987) 439, who applies it *inter alia* to the cult of saints.

[158] Cf. S. Freud, *Gesammelte Werke* vol. 15, 79: "Vergleiche entscheiden nichts, aber sie können machen dass man 'sich heimisch fühlt'." Or, for those who do not feel at home with "sich heimisch fühlen" or with Freud (or both): "Comparison provides the means by which *we* 're-vision' phenomena as *our* data in order to solve our theoretical problems" (J.Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine* [Chicago 1990] 52) or "Analogies will not teach us what happened in the past: they may help to keep our reconstructions within limits consistent with what is known to happen" (A.D. Nock, *AJPh* 65 [1944] 99–105). On the strengths and risks of analogy (the risks due to its potentially ideological nature): L. Canfora, Analogie et histoire, *H&T* 22 (1983) 22–42.

[159] See especially M. Herzfeld, Honor and Shame: Problems in the Comparative Analysis of Moral Systems, *Man* 15 (1980) 339–351; *idem,* The Horns of the Mediterranean Dilemma, *American Ethnologist* 11 (1984) 439–454; *idem* 1987; J. de Pina-Cabral, The Mediterranean as a Category of Regional Comparison, *Current Anthropology* 30 (1989) 399–406. Personally I do feel that this critique risks overshooting the mark. I endorse the sensible reply by Cohen 1991, 38–41, who argues that, despite many differences, there are typical patterns of social practices that characterise a wide range of Mediterranean communities, and which display a considerable similarity in the underlying normative structure. See more recently also: I. Malkin (ed.), *Mediterranean Paradigms and Classical Antiquity* (London – New York 2005), espec. the contributions by N. Purcell, I. Morris & G. Woolf; W.V. Harris (ed.), *Rethinking the Mediterranean* (Oxford 2005), which includes reactions to P. Horden & N. Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford 2000).

[160] M. Herzfeld, *Ours Once More: Folklore, Ideology and the Making of Modern Greece* (Austin 1982); L.M. Danforth, The Ideological Context of the Search for

Every visitor to the Mediterranean will be struck by the alarming number of local varieties of Madonnas and Panaghias. Five Madonnas are honoured in Montegrano, a little village in South Italy. They are differentiated according to principles of topography or quality, and for many of the inhabitants the connection between them and the biblical mother of Christ is opaque to say the least.[161] When a Montegrano boy who had studied for the priesthood attempted to explain to an old woman that there is only one Madonna, she laughed at him. "You studied with the priests for eight years," she said, "and you haven't even learned the differences between the Madonnas!"[162] The context leaves no doubt that the five different Madonnas are indeed perceived as distinct and different *personae*.[163] Anyone who has witnessed processions of the religious fraternities in a Spanish town at the annual festival knows that the Jesus of one church simply is not the same as the Jesus of the next.[164] Nor, again, and indeed less so, is Maria. In the civil war local "reds" from Santander refused to destroy their shrine

---

Continuities in Greek Culture, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 2 (1984) 53–85. Generally, again, I agree with Cohen (preceding note). Asked why we should select the modern Mediterranean as an exemplary model for ancient Greek phenomena (not, to be sure, as a case of proved historical or ethnic continuity) he says: "The main reason is that there is no other group of well-documented societies which manifest the same patterns of social practices." I have called this principle "matching codes of behaviour" and applied it in Wife and Helpmate: Women of Ancient Athens in Anthropologial Perspective, in: J. Blok & P. Mason (edd.), *Sexual Asymmetry: Studies in Ancient Society* (Amsterdam 1987) 59–86. However, the discussion is in full swing. See for instance J. Walsh, in a critism of Cohen, *Ploutarchos* 9,1 (Nov. 1992) 57–60. On the position of women: Chr. Sourvinou-Inwood, in: E. Reeder (ed.), *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece* (Princeton 1995) 111–120. On non-continuity in dance, see Naerebout 1997, 54–102. For the defense: P. Walcot, Continuity and Tradition: The Persistence of Greek Values, *G&R* 43 (1996) 169–177.

[161] Moreover (Banfield 1958, 125) "Some peasants even believe that certain saints are more powerful than God."

[162] Banfield 1958, 124 f.

[163] For instance, only one of them is generally identified as the mother of Christ (who, incidentally, in this case is fully exchangeable with God). The Madonnas are: (1) the Madonna of Pompei, whose miracles are well-known in Montegrano; (2) the Madonna of Carmin, whose feast is celebrated in a nearby town; (3) the Madonna of Peace, who is honoured in Montegrano with a feast and with a statue erected after World War I and to whom the mothers prayed for their sons at war; (4) the Madonna of Assunta, the protectress of one of the Montegrano churches; and (5) the Madonna Addolorata, most commonly identified with the mother of Christ.

[164] As for late Antiquity, one can only guess what the author of the Christian *defixio Domne lobis (nobis) obt[i]me cabtuline (Capitoline)* (*AE* 1939) and the parents of an unbaptized baby, who thank Jesus, "the Lord of the Olympus" (Peter Cramer, *Baptism and Change in the Early Middle Ages, c.200–c.1150* (Cambridge 1993) with thanks to Gabriel Herrmann) really mean.

image of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, by arguing that "Our Virgin is Communist."[165] In contemporary Greece it is just the same.[166] Asked by the resident anthropologist—there are few villages devoid of their own anthropologist—whether the Hagios Georgios of their village was the same as the St. Georges of other places, the locals declared: "The Hagios Georgios we have here is not the same Saint who comes from Cappadocia. Ours is from right here."[167] Likewise they explain that there is "a local Hagia Paraskevi who is from here; not the Hagia Paraskevi from outside."[168] And these saints are not even marked by

---

[165] W.A. Christian Jr., The Spanish Shrine, *Numen* 24 (1977) 72–77, espec. 77. Cf. Christian 1972, 89–93 and index s.v. advocations, apparitions, Mary. Espec. 48: "The church maintains that there is only one Mary, that all representations of her are interchangeable. But devotions have crystallized around different representations, a manifestation of the inevitable problem of localization (....) The parishes...(with specific shrine images)...countered the universalist impulse by diversifying the image of Mary. As a result, even though the same divine figure reigned everywhere, the symbols for different communities were distinctive, and *each community could be said to have its own Mary*" (my italics). Compare a discussion in the Canterbury Tales: "Of all Our Ladies I love best Our Lady of Walsingham. And I Our Lady of Ipswich," as quoted by K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London 1971) 29. The plurality of Our Ladies is obviously related to Maria's topographic distribution as well as to her many functions. See: J. Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven – London 1996) and the bibliography in: *ER* 9 (1987) 252, s.v. Mary. On numerous different Madonnas in ex voto's: M. Brauneck, *Religiöse Volkskunst* (Köln 1978) 74 ff. For ex votos with three different Madonnas in one picture: R. Creux, *Ex voto. Die Bilderwelt des Volkes* (Frauenfeld 1980) 12.

[166] As it was in medieval Byzantium, which claimed to be the home of *the* (one and only) Maria. N.H. Baynes, *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* (London 1955) 255: "And of course the Byzantines conceived of the Virgin as dwelling with them at Constantinople; where else should she dwell?" See there for some striking tales expressing this belief. Her robe, too, was in the possession of Byzantium, *ibidem* 247. For a full treatment see: B.V. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park, Pennsylvania 2006).

[167] Blum & Blum 1970, 46. M. Herzfeld, The Significance of the Insignificant: Blasphemy as Ideology, *Man* 19 (1984) 653–663, espec. 654, and "Refractions of Holiness, Tropes of Pollution" in *idem*, 1987, 166 ff., explains this as a synecdoche: the name of the saint actually only stands for the icon which he is locally said to prefer over all others. "The icon can be said to represent materially the *aspect* of the saint's essence that is signified by the local epithet." This is a good example of how a 'unitarian' view may breed dyslexia. His reproduction of the text is glaringly contradicted by the words as cited by Blum and Blum, which after "Ours is from right here" continue: "He appeared here for the first time long ago, up on the rock where you can see that his horse stood." This cannot but refer to the saint himself. Which, of course, does nothing to deny that icons are important tools to visualize the holy person, represented by them, as Herzfeld argues.

[168] *Ibid*. 324. Cf. 93: "I am not sure if the bones belong to the same St. Paraskevi as people usually talk about, or whether she is a different Saint,' and cf. pp. 90; 196.

different epithets. Their epithet, one might say, is an implied possessive pronoun.[169]

Now, these phenomena are not restricted to *modern* Greek folklore.[170] In antiquity, the same region that boasts a 'St George from right here' housed a goddess named 'Mother of the Gods from right here' (Μήτηρ Θεῶν Αὐτόχθων),[171] as well as a Macedonian Dionysos.[172] Incidentally,

---

[169] Possessive pronouns—as we shall discuss more extensively later—can make all the difference, witness modern Cretan curses like: "to hell with your Panaghia" or "to hell with your Jesus." Though I have drastically adapted the language to fit the occasion (the actual terminology is too coarse to handle), these blasphemic expressions may still bewilder the non-native, given its allegedly monotheistic context (if not for other reasons). Herzfeld, 'Significance' *o.c.* (above n. 167) and *idem* 1987, 157–170, explains this 'fragmentation' of holy figures as a spontaneous, yet conscious, rejection of the shared identity with one's enemies, a segmentation or refraction of an identity embodied in the common ethnic Greek awareness of having one god and one language. I am not sure whether the Cretans who utter these exclamations would find this explanation enlightening. At any rate, the curses necessarily imply a clear differentiation between your Panaghia and mine. I do not know of similar ritual reviling of another's god(s) in antiquity. Occasionally one finds something of the sort: Eur. *Hipp.* 113, "Your Cypris, let her get lost" (Τὴν σὴν δὲ Κύπριν πόλλ' ἔγω χαίρειν λέγω). But this does not concern identity and the attitude here leads to disaster.

[170] Nor is this a Mediterranean privilege. A tiny congregation of the reformed church in a Dutch village at last had discovered the *real* name of God and thus created their own God. That name was 'Lord Ouch' as revealed in a psalm, which in their version began: "Heer Aai," (Lord, ouch,..) and that was the way he should be addressed, while just simply God or Lord ("Heere Heere") certainly was the name of another—suspicious—imposter. The creation of this type of name is well-known. Cf. *Enzyklopädie des Märchen* I (1977) s.v. Ach, Ah me, Och, Oh, Ohimé, Uff. These appear to develop into names of a giant, a demon, a witch, the devil etc. W. Burkert, ΘΕΩΝ ΟΙΙΙΝ ΟΥΚ ΑΛΕΓΟΝΤΕΣ. Götterfurcht und Leumannsche Missverständnis, *MH* 38, 1981, 195–204, mentions examples of chance semantic changes.

[171] P.M. Petsas, Μήτηρ Θεῶν Αὐτόχθων. Unpublished Manumission Inscriptions from Macedonia, *Ancient Macedonia* 3 (Thessaloniki 1983) 229–246 (*SEG* 33.532), who explains this deity as: "the indigenous in contrast to deities... introduced... from elsewhere." M.B. Hatzopoulos, *Cultes et rites de passage en Macédoine* (Athens 1994) 64 f., regards a series of female deities worshipped in Beroia, including the *Meter theôn autochthôn*, as different *interpretationes* of one pre-Hellenic πότνια θηρῶν and gives more literature. The testimonia (all dating from the period between circa 150 to 300 AD) in: Petsas *e.a.* 2000 as listed in index s.v. αὐτόχθων. Nor is she the only goddess with the epithet *autochthôn*. From an inscription of the second c. BC it appears that Samos (not unjustifiedly) boasts a *Hera autochthôn*. See: W. Peek, Ein neuer samischer Historiker, *Klio* 33 (1940) 164–170, espec. 168 f., who argues that this cannot mean simply 'the Samian Hera' but must denote 'eingeboren', 'seit alters eingesessen', which implies that she must be the transfiguration of an old Carian goddess. Cf. *FGrHist* 540 T 1; Chaniotis 1988, 308 f. E 16. Hdt. 4.180.2 records that girls of the North African Ausees tribe perform ancestral rites for "the native goddess (τῇ αὐθιγενέι θεῷ) whom *we* call Athena."

[172] Διονύσῳ Μακεδονικῷ (Larissa, 1c. AD–1 c. BC): K.I. Gallis, *Arch. Deltion* 27 (1972 [1977]) 419; *SEG* 27.206; *BE* 1978, 256.

the Macedonian Mother of the gods had to face competition from the *Lydian* Mother of the Gods (Μητρὶ Θεῶν Λυδ[ίαι]) as this goddess is known from an inscription from the region of Sardis.[173] In that region she was associated (if not identified) with 'our Rhea' (Ῥέης ἡμετέρης) and a 'Lydian Zeus' (Ζεὺς Λύδιος).[174] With these texts, however, we have landed in the period of the Roman Empire and they are illustrative of the competition between regions and cities of Asia Minor with respect to cultural and political primacy. Glory and hate ("la gloire et la haine") were—in Louis Robert's famous words—the emotions that dominated the relations between Greek cities.[175] Boasting the privilege of being the birthplace of—or better still, to have been founded by—a god or hero was a favourite tool in these contests.[176] Even so, we observe that, in past and present, the aspects of place and of local identities—here, there; ours, theirs—, either implied or expressed explicitly by a topographical epithet, play a major part. Indeed, our exposé has gradually shifted from epithets indicating function or quality towards toponymical predicates, which, besides prevailing in the

---

[173] Robert 1987, 359 ff., a unique and isolated Lydian claim on the goddess who is often referred to as Μήτηρ Φρύγια. The Mother of the Gods, Cybele, was already called ἐπιχωρίη θεός of Sardes in Hdt. 5.102.1. See: L. Roller, *In Search of God the Mother: The Cult of Anatolian Cybele* (Berkeley 1999) 128–131.

[174] 'Our Rhea' in *Anth.Pal.* 9.645, as discussed by E. Schwertheim, *Forschungen in Lydien* (Asia Minor Studien 17 [Bonn 1995]) 85–109, to whom I owe the epigraphic evidence, including the Lydian Zeus, for which see also: L. Robert, *Villes d'Asie mineure* (Paris 1962[2]) 207; 214.

[175] L. Robert, La titulature de Nicée et de Nicomédie: la gloire et la haine, *HSCPh* 81 (1977) 1–39 = *OMS* VI (Paris 1989) 211–249. See recently: A. Heller, *Les bêtises des Grecs. Conflits et rivalités entre cités d'Asie et de Bithynie à l'époque romaine (129 a.C.–235 p.C.)* (Paris 2006). More in Chaniotis 2010, 113.

[176] According to the Ephesians, for instance, Artemis was born in Ephesos (Tac. *Ann.* 3.61.1). The goddess was claimed for the city with numerous epithets, such as ἡ Ἄρτεμις τῶν Ἐφεσίων (Acts 19.28); ἡ πάτριος ἡμῖν θεός (Xen. Eph. 1.11.5; 3.5.5.). On other expressions of relationship between goddess and city (including the neocorate of her temple) see: Oster 1976, 30 ff. Generally: J.H.M. Strubbe, Gründer kleinasiatischer Städte. Fiktion und Realität, *Anc. Soc.* 15–17 (1984–86) 253–304; T.S. Scheer, *Mythische Vorväter. Zur Bedeutung griechischer Heroenmythen im Selbstverständnis kleinasiatischer Städte* (Munich 1993). Generally on religious action as an expression of chauvinism in this period: Price 1984a, 126–132, with emphasis on various procedures to achieve *homonoia*; A. Chaniotis, Sich selbst feiern? Städtische Feste des Hellenismus im Spannungsfeld zwischen Religion und Politik, in: Wörrle-Zanker 1995, 147–172; cf. *idem* 2010, espec. 113 ff. with recent bibliography in n. 4. Cf. also Chr. Frateantonio, *Religion und Städtekonkurrenz: zum politischen und kulturellen Kontext von Pausanias' Periegese* (Berlin – New York 2007). The technique is as old as Hesiod: *Cat. Women* 63 = Paus. 2.26.7.

ancient evidence, also dominate the modern debate as we shall discuss shortly. But these are certainly not the only differentiators.

If we now return to the calendar of Erchia, at first sight, there seems to be nothing against conceiving the six gods with the name Apollo as variant manifestations of the same god though functionally or topographically distinguished by means of their respective epithets. Just the same is the case with Zeus with his strictly functional epithets: Ombrios (concerned with rain), Herkeios (protector of the court and the house), Ktesios ("Zeus of possessions," protector of house and property), Polieus (protector of the city), Hikesios (protector of the supplicants), Xenios (protector of the guests). The epithets may be seen as devices to assign different qualities to one and the same god. As could be expected, Vernant and his adherents fully endorse—and generalize—this orderly point of view: "Zeus' unity is not that of a single and unique *person* but of a *power* whose various aspects may be manifested in different ways."[177] Similar attempts to preserve a principle of unity while acknowledging a baffling cultic multiplicity abound in studies of ancient polytheism,[178] as well as in modern

---

[177] Vernant 1980, 99, where see his discussion of the various epithets as different aspects of one god. Cf. p. 94: "He is a god in the strict sense of the word, a *theos*, precisely because he is so many things at the same time—things connected with what, to our eyes, are completely distinct or even opposed domains." The same in Vernant 1990, 13: "Ce qui fait d'une Puissance une divinité, c'est qu'elle rassemble sous son autorité une pluralité d' 'effets', pour nous complètement disparates, mais que le Grec apparente parce qu'il y voit l'expression d'un même pouvoir s'exerçant dans les domaines les plus divers." This phrase and the introduction of which it forms part does not occur in the original English version: Greek Religion, in: *ER* 6 (1987) 99–118, where see the long digression on Zeus with many, sometimes contrasting epithets, yet being one. On the question: are Greek gods 'powers' or 'persons'? (a question to which we shall return in Ch. IV) see also: N. Loraux, What is a Goddess? in: P. Schmitt-Pantel (ed.), *A History of Women in the West* I (Cambridge Mass. 1992) 11–44, with abundant literature.

[178] Vernant 1980, 99, reserves this unified picture of Zeus (as in preceding note) to (Homeric) myth whereas "when a god is worshipped, however, it is rather the aspect of plurality that is stressed. The living religion of the Greeks knows Zeus not in one single form but rather as many different Zeus, each with its own epithet peculiar to the cult that links it with its own particular area of activity. In worship the important thing is to address oneself to the Zeus that is suitable to the particular situation." This, however, as noticed before, comes very close to being at odds with the picture sketched in the preceding note. Cf. Rudhardt 1958, 97: "Nous verrions la personnalité de chacun (des dieux) se dédoubler, s'éparpiller en plusieurs divinités aux épithètes, aux localisations, aux fonctions différentes et conserver pourtant au-delà de tous ces aspects une insaisissable unité, dont témoigne la permanence de leur nom." Just so: Pirenne-Delforge 1988, 142–157, espec. 142; Jost 1992, 34. Parker 2003, 182: recommends "following the lead of H.S. Versnel 1990 1–38, and abandoning the attempt to

Mediterranean anthropology. For instance the anthropologist who tried to restore sense in modern Greek chaos: "There is one Panaghia but she has many forms."[179] Not only *modern* intellectuals. We saw Cicero scorn 'the separatists' among the Greek theologians and in Xen. *Symp*. 8.9, Socrates says:

> Whether there is one Aphrodite or two, Ourania and Pandemos, I do not know (οὐκ οἶδα). For even Zeus, who is believed to be one and the same god, nonetheless has many epithets (καὶ γὰρ Ζεὺς ὁ αὐτὸς δοκῶν εἶναι πολλὰς ἐπωνυμίας ἔχει).

The interesting point, however, is that Socrates does show concern about the problem and even continues acknowledging the distinction between Aphrodite Pandemos and Ourania, *on the ground of their different altars, temples and sacrifices* (χωρὶς ἑκατέρᾳ βωμοί τέ εἰσι καὶ νεῳ̣ καὶ θυσίαι)![180]

As we have observed above, it is this latter separative position that a majority of the believers in modern Italy, Spain and Greece would endorse. They explicitly resist this pursuit of unity by theologians, anthropologists and other intellectuals. For the first time, but not for the last, we see ourselves confronted with the question of whose viewpoint we are representing: our own, that of the Greeks? Of which

---

resolve or eliminate ambiguity. It is precisely the ambiguity inherent in the epithet system that makes it such a satisfying vehicle for religious thought. It allows one to appeal to a figure who is very specialized and relevant to one's needs, if the epithet is functional, or very close to hand, if it is topographic. And yet that figure also has the power and dignity of one of the greatest Olympians" (with reference to Gladigow 1981, 1224 and 1228 f. who already said much the same). Even Mikalson 2005, who defends a very 'separative' distinction between 'poetic' and 'cultic' identities, in his most recent book makes statements such as (p. 34): "We might think of many of these Athenas as essentially different deities offering quite different services, but the Athenians brought them all together under the name of Athena." And on Hermes Chthonios versus 'Ouranic' Hermes (p. 39): "Hermes might seem to us two separate deities (…). But the Greeks saw 'both' deities as Hermes, and the problems we have categorizing them seem not to have troubled the Greeks." Cf. briefly: E. Lévy, Peut-on parler d'*une* religion grecque? *Ktema* 25 (2000) 11–18.

[179] Quoted by Blum & Blum 1970, 323.

[180] Of course, as always, serving his argument. See on these two goddesses and their identities: Pirenne-Delforge 1988; *eadem,* 1994, index s.v. Aphrodite Ourania and Pandèmos. On A. Pandemos in the late archaic period: A. Scholtz, Aphrodite Pandemos at Naukratis, *GRBS* 43 (2002/2003) 231–242. On A. Pandemos as an 'Aphrodite politique': Z. Petre, *Aphrodite Pandemos, StudClas* 28–30 (1992–1994) 5–14. Interesting on the polysemantic Aphrodite of Kos: M.P.J. Dillon, Post-nuptial Sacrifices on Kos (Segre, *ED* 178) and Ancient Greek Marriage Rites, *ZPE* 124 (1999) 63–80. Cf. R.C.T. Parker, The Cult of Aphrodite Pandamos and Pontia on Cos, in: Horstmanshoff e.a. 2002, 143–160.

Greeks? Of philosophers like Plato, of whom Isaiah Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, 208) said that "the notion that One is good, many—diversity—is bad is… deeply rooted in the Platonic tradition," and who perhaps would not object to calling gods 'powers'? Or that of a majority of the Athenian—or worse, the Greek—population, who probably would have no inkling of what we are talking about?[181] Are they less interesting than philosophers or tragic authors? Not in the eyes of historians,[182] including the present writer, who would rather endorse the words of Joseph Mitchell in his *McSorley's Wonderful Saloon:*

> The people in a number of the stories are of a kind that many writers have got in the habit of referring to as "little people." I regard this phrase as patronizing and repulsive. There are no little people in this book. They are as big as you are, whoever you are.

This may be the right moment to pay attention to the important and very relevant warnings concerning the study of Roman religion by Rüpke 2007, 67, who argues that we should not try to impose our bent for theological systematics on ancient religious practice "since inconsistencies and ambivalences are inherent in any form of praxis." He also warns against giving undue preference to

> foregrounding texts, especially discursive, argumentative or systematizing ones, as sources. Trying to regularize ancient religious practice like

---

[181] I mean those Greeks whom Angelos Chaniotis has in mind when he writes: "Bei den alten Griechen ging es vor allem darum: Was koche ich heute Abend, und weniger um die Frage: gibt es einen idealen Staat?" (*Kinderuniversitas. Mit Kindern in der Wissenswelt,* University Heidelberg). I hardly dare—but cannot resist—to refer to A. Etzione, *The Moral Dimension. Toward a New Economics* (New York 1988) XI, 15, 139, cf. 145, who argues that people's thoughts and acts tend to be subrational because of limited intellectual capabilities, as quoted by Naerebout 1997, 319, who adds: "If anything we tend to underestimate the differences in intelligence, skills and proficiency: generally it is suggested that most individuals are clustered around the average, while in fact all test results combine to show a gentle curve sloping towards the minimum and the maximum. It is surprising that historians (and other analysts of human society) seldom, if ever, refer to this basic fact. Apparently scholars often consider their own mental abilities as normative, probably without giving the issue much thought." Fortunately there was one great classical scholar who did acknowledge these simple facts of life: A.D. Nock. See his considerations below p. 524.

[182] Here the theory of "the Great" versus the "Little Traditions" (and their interactions) as introduced in the 1950s by the Chicago anthropologists Robert Redfield and MacKim Marriott deserve more attention then they get from classicists involved in the study of Greek religion.

> this, so that it can be formulated as a 'doctrine', as a system of thought, is basically to do theology.

And he adds that questions about the religion of the common man should not be answered with the help of a systematic formulation of a merely implicit theology, but through a description of their practice. Now, all this is just as true for Greek religion[183] and it is this principle that underlies not only the present chapter but this whole book, as well as much of my earlier work.

Hdt. 1.44 at first glance seems to sustain the unitarian position, yet on second view rather undermines its universal validity. When King Croesus learns that his son has been killed in an accident at the hand of a guest who had found protection in his palace,

> he called on Zeus 'Purifier' (Δία καθάρσιον), taking him as witness of what he had suffered at the hands of the guest; he also called 'Protector of the Hearth' (ἐπίστιος) and 'Protector of Friends' (ἑταιρήιος), with these names addressing that very same god (τὸν αὐτὸν τοῦτον ὀνομάζων θεόν), calling [him] 'Epistios because he had unwittingly entertained his son's murderer in his house, and calling [him] 'Hetaireios', because the man he had sent to guard his son had turned out to be his bitterest enemy.[184]

Once again there is an interesting point, namely that Herodotus takes the trouble to emphasize that it *is* one and the same god Zeus,[185] who is invoked under three different epithets indicating three different qualities or functions. I could not imagine clearer evidence that this unity in diversity is *not* self-evident, either for the author himself or for his readers. These texts are particularly important since they provide an ancient Greek—emic (insider)—legitimation for our—etic (outsider)[186]—questions. But we must not expect explicit or unequivocal

---

[183] Belayche 2010, 149, warns exactly against the same pitfall when she recommends: "The relationship between speculation and praxis requires us, therefore, to pay attention to the nature of the documents that are cited."

[184] My translation is as literal as (barely) bearable. All translations I have seen—as usually—imply heavy interpretation. Note that the Greek verb καλέω, like English 'to call', denotes both 'to call on' = 'invoke' and to call = 'to name'.

[185] I am not the first to have been struck by the singularly explicit comment τὸν αὐτὸν τοῦτον ὀνομάζων θεόν in this text. Cf. Ph.-E. Legrand, *Hérodote. Histories* (Paris 1932): "Réflexion singulière, telle qu'on en trouve parfois dans les ῥήσεις de la tragédie, aux endroits mêmes les plus pathétiques;" Asheri 2007: "Herodotus' explanation of the three epithets could not be better."

[186] For a history of the emic-etic debate see: P. Jorion, Emic and Etic: Two anthropological ways of spilling ink, *Cambridge Anthropology* 8 (1983) 41–68.

answers. Different contexts may foster different interpretations, few people were inclined to reflect, fewer to comment explicitly on such issues as the difference between separative and unitarian views. The fact that most texts are ambiguous on this point may appear regrettable at first sight, but on second thought may hide a particular meaning of its own. Let us have a look at a few epigraphical texts from the imperial period, an era that, with all differences, is no less polytheistic then the preceding one.[187]

It is impossible to decide whether one should read a *lex sacra* from Pergamum[188] with sacrifices to Zeus Apotropaios, to Zeus Meilichios, to Artemis Prothyraia, to Artemis [....] (Διὶ Ἀποτροπαίῳ, Διὶ Μειλιχίῳ, Ἀρτέμιδι Προθυραίαι καὶ Ἀρτέμιδι [....]) as addressing different Zeuses and Artemides or the same gods under different names.[189] And people would not be aware of any inherent problem. Conspicuously ambiguous and illustrative, however, is the instruction given by the famous oracle of Apollo at Klaros to the inhabitants of Hierapolis during a plague.[190] They must sacrifice to the gods in heaven and in the

---

[187] We should keep in mind that Greek polytheistic religion in its traditional form, including foundation of temples continued its existence into the 5th c. AD. See: Ch. Roueché, Aphrodisia in Late Antiquity, *JRS Monograph* 5 (1989); A.-V. Pont, Le paysage religieux grec traditionnel dans les cités d'Asie Mineure occidentale au IV^{e} et au début du V^{e} siècle, *REG* 117 (2004) 546–577. A balanced view on continuities and changes in Hellenistic religiosity: F. Graf, Bemerkungen zur bürgerlichen Religiosität im Zeitalter des Hellenismus, in: Wörrle – Zanker 1995, 103–114.

[188] 1st–2nd c. AD? M. Wörrle, Die Lex Sacra von der Hallenstrasse, in: Chr. Habicht, *Altertümer von Pergamon* VIII 3. *Die Inschriften des Asklepieions* (Berlin 1969) 167–190.

[189] Zeus Apotropaios and Zeus Meilichios are functionally related and, like the Artemides, both involved with the incubation and healing practices of the Asklepieion. The same problem emerges in a *defixio*, published by D.R. Jordan in: Jordan *e.a.* 1999, 117, where the author curses the person "who has put a curse on him before Hermes Eriounios or Katochos or Dolios or anywhere else." These three epithets are indeed typical of Hermes in *defixiones*. Here, however, the search for completeness as discussed above may play a role. Moreover, the curious "anywhere else" may imply diversity of residence of gods that are experienced as different.

[190] 2nd c. AD. G. Pugliese Carratelli, *ASAA* 41–2 (1963–4) 360; M.L. West, *ZPE*, 1 (1967) 184 f.; H.W. Parke, *The Oracles of Apollo in Asia Minor* (London etc. 1985) 150–158, espec. 153 ff.; R. Merkelbach & J. Stauber, Die Orakel des Apollon von Klaros, *EA* 27 (1996) 1–54, no. 4, pp. 11 ff.; *SGO* 02/12/01. Like four very comparable oracles from Klaros it most probably refers to the great plague of 165 AD. L. Robert *OMS* 5.570–2 already argued that they clearly distinguish themselves from the oracle of Didyma. Cf. also Lane Fox 1986, 231–241. On the whole complex of the Klarian "Pestorakel" see now the thorough treatment by Oesterheld 2008, 43–231, with text and discussion of the present oracle at 74–116.

netherworld, but always above all honour Apollo Kareios[191]—"for you are my offspring (ἐκ γὰρ ἐμεῦ γένος ἔστε) and that of Mopsos"—and at all city gates mark out sacred plots and set up statues of Phoibos of Klaros, with a bow to extirpate the plague.[192] This is an illuminating text, even though—or rather precisely *because*—it is "more Clarian than clarity."[193] It shows how in the mind of the redactor of the oracle text the imagery shifts back and forth between diversity and unity. Apollo Kareios, at home in Hierapolis, where he shares a temple with another Apollo, namely the city patron Apollo Archegetes-Pythios, is closely related with yet another Apollo, namely Helios Lairbenos, and is of local Phrygian origin.[194] As such, Apollo Kareios clearly distinguishes himself in several respects, and particularly in iconography, from the 'normal' Delphic/Greek type of Apollo. The Klarian Apollo, on the other hand, famous for his oracle, is clearly related (also iconographically) with the great Greek Apollo, but (as may be seen from numerous expressions) is very much an independent God with a distinctly individual identity. The Hieropolitan patron god Apollo Archegetes-Pythios is, as his name indicates, definitely conceived as a clone of the great Greek (Delphic) Apollo. Despite all this, the Klarian Apollo in this oracle claims an all-encompassing position by calling the inhabitants of Hierapolis, who stem from Apollo Kareios, *his own*

---

[191] These cumulative lists of the same god or different homonymous gods with different local epithets bloom in the Imperial period notably in Asia Minor. Not only in inscriptions: in his second *Sacred Tale* 18, Aelius Aristides sees Asklepios in a dream: "He was at the same time Asklepios, and Apollo both the Klarian and he who is called Kalliteknos in Pergamon and whose is the first of the three temples."

[192] This type of ritual is known from other Klarian oracles as well: collected by Parke *l.c.* (above n. 190) and Merkelbach-Stauber *o.c.* (n. 190) nos. 8 and 9. For another (Klarian?) oracle on a different plague-averting statue (of Artemis) see: F. Graf, An Oracle against Pestilence from a Western Anatolian Town, *ZPE* 92 (1992) 267–292. Graf collects and discusses these Klarian oracles prescribing the erection of a statue in: The Oracle and the Image. Returning to Some Oracles from Clarus, *ZPE* 160 (2007) 113–119. Z. Várhelyi, Magic, Religion, and Syncretism at the Oracle of Claros, in: S.R. Asirvatham *e.a.* (edd.), *Between Magic and Religion. Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and Society* (Lanham 2001) 13–31, discusses the same oracles from the perspective of their magical and/or religious implications. Cf. Busine 2005, 172–180; Oesterheld 2008, 74–116.

[193] As MacMullen 1981, 87 commented on another of these often rather enigmatic oracles.

[194] There is a good discussion of the connections between these gods and the nature of the Kareian Apollo in: A. Ceylan & T. Ritti, A New Dedication to Apollo Kareios, *EA* 28 (1997) 57–67, with a keen eye for questions of identity and distinction. *SGO* (above n. 190) p. 262: "Über die genauen historischen Zusammenhänge (i.e. of Apollon Kareios, Apollon Klarios, and Mopsos) kann man nur spekulieren."

offspring. Here then, we perceive an outspoken ambiguity between unity and diversity, characteristic of this type of listing.[195] On the other hand, neat and clear instances of unity are not hard to find either: the curious Herakles Kallinikos "the one at the agora and at the harbour" (ὁ ἐπὶ ἀγορᾷ καὶ ἐπὶ λιμένι) at Kos[196] is, on syntactic grounds, clearly qualified as one single individual, with two sanctuaries.

Finally, a Hellenistic funerary inscription from Oinoanda (2nd c. BC) presents an interesting curse: "Let him be liable to (the wrath of) Leto, Artemis Ephesia, Artemis Pergaia, and Apollo" (ἔνοχος ἔστω Λητῷ, Ἀρτέμιδι Ἐφεσίᾳ, Ἀρτέμιδι Περγαίᾳ, Ἀπόλλωνι). It is difficult to resist the feeling that these opposing pairs of Artemides are conceived as consisting of two *different* deities.[197] Louis Robert, for one, is explicit on the differentiation of the many local Artemides in Asia Minor:

> That the deities were well kept apart in the minds of the believers is obvious in a dedication from Panamara, where we find among other gods: κα[ὶ] Ἀρτέμιδι Πελδεκειτίδι καὶ Λευκιανῇ καὶ Ἀρτέμιδι Κωράζων καὶ Ἀρτέμιδι Ἐφεσίᾳ καὶ Ἀρτέμιδι Λευκοφρυηνῇ.[198]

---

[195] Parke *o.c.* (above n. 190) 155: "Anyway the Clarian priesthood took occasion to adopt a politely patronizing tone toward Apollo Kareios, while insisting on their own prerogative." Apollo seems to have a predilection for such ambiguities. In an oath text from Dreros (*Syll.*[3] 527; *I.Cret.* I ix 1) we find an Apollo Putios (= Pythios) side by side with an Apollo Delphinios, of which the first is the clone of the Delphic Apollo, the second a local Apollo. I wrote "seems" for in the same inscription we encounter a Zeus Agoraios next to a Zeus Tallaios. For the occurrence of numerous, mostly local, Zeuses, especially in Crete, often in one inscription, see the indexes of *I.Cret.*

[196] 1st c. BC. M. Segrè, *Iscrizioni di Cos* I–II, edited by D. Peppas Delmoussou & M.A Rizzo (Rome 1994) ED no. 180. Cf. Gauthier in: *BE* 1995, 448 (p. 503): "dont on précise les deux lieux du culte."

[197] L. Robert *BE* 1978, 462: "Il est intéressant de trouver, *bien distinguées, deux Artémis ensemble*" (my italics). *Idem, BCH* 102 (1978) 541, refers to Artemidorus 2.35, who mentions with special reverence the Lycian Artemis Ephesia, Artemis Pergaia and Artemis Eleuthera. Strubbe 1997 no. 39 gives further literature on the identities of the two Artemides. C. Roueché, *Floreat Perge*, in M.M. Mackenzie & C. Roueché (edd.), *Images of Authority. Papers Presented to Joyce Reynolds on the Occasion of her Seventieth Birthday* (Cambridge 1989) 206–228, recognized in acclamations at Perge (ca. 275/6 AD, *SEG* 34.1306; cf. EBGR 1990, no. 264) the very same two city goddesses, Diana Ephesia and Diana Pergesia (i.e. Artemis Pergaia), but her reading is decisively refuted by P. Weiss, *Auxe Perge.* Beobachtungen zu einem bemerkenswerten städtischen Dokument des späten 3. Jahrhunderts n.Chr., *Chiron* 21 (1991), 353–392 (cf. EBGR 1991, no. 273).

[198] *BCH* 101 (1977) 75, n. 53 (in my translation), referring to the editio princeps in *BCH* 1888, 259 no. 54 (Cf. now *I.Stratonikeia* I, no. 283). This footnote does not mark Robert's most lucky day. The page in the *editio princeps* is 269 instead of 259—which is a trifle—and it presents the last mentioned goddess as Λευκοφρύνῃ (*sic*) *without* Αρτέμιδι, which is *not* a trifle because it precisely illustrates that even such a reader

For the moment the most prudent, albeit perhaps somewhat disquieting, conclusion should be that gods bearing the same name but with different epithets *may, but need not* have been perceived self-evidently as different functional or local manifestations or aspects of *one* god.

They may but need not

They may. In the first section of this chapter we have seen that those who prayed to a god with many (topographical) epithets did not necessarily doubt that it was only one and the same god whom they addressed in their prayer. As a matter of fact, in cult hymns polyonymy is one of the most powerful instruments to emphasize the god's unity. The unity may be expressed *disertis verbis*, as in Aesch. *PV* 209 f. Θέμις καὶ Γαῖα πολλῶν ὀνομάτων μόρφη μία (Themis and Earth, of many names but one form). Plato (Socrates) and Herodotus, in various passages quoted earlier, agreed. Lazzarini, in her collection of votive inscriptions of the archaic period,[199] presents numerous dedications which, though addressed to locally worshipped Olympian gods, nonetheless name these gods with poetical *epikleseis* such as in the case of Apollo: *hekatebolos, argyrotoxos, pai Dios megaloio*, having the typically hymnic objective of testifying to the range of their powers and the popularity of their worship. These are unequivocal references to the cultural unity as embodied in the common heritage of the literary works of Homer and Hesiod, the poets who, according to Herodotus,

> had bestowed upon the gods their appropriate epithets (τὰς ἐπωνυμίας), distributing their powers and offices (τιμάς τε καὶ τέχνας διελόντες), while also shaping (literally: 'signalizing') their appearance (καὶ εἴδεα αὐτῶν σημήναντες).[200]

By this very reference to a theological or mythical *koine* the gods concerned are registered as participants in a universal pan-hellenic pantheon. Here then, we detect a 'Paris fashion' of constructing a divine world.

However, we also noticed that Apollo Sminthios had acquired such an autonomic status side by side with Apollo that *as* Apollo Sminthios he was showered with lists of topographical epithets. Here both the

---

as Robert may tend to (mis)read a text according to his expectations. None of these commentators proposes a date of the inscription.

[199] Lazzarini 1976, 78–86.

[200] Hdt. 2.53. Cf. Hom. *Il.* 15.187–193; Hes. *Th.* 112. For Xenophanes see Ch. III.

unity of the god Apollo (behind his wealth of epithets) and the uniqueness of the Apollo with the epithet Sminthios is demonstrated in an unmistakable manner. And speaking about Apollo: epithets referring to cult-places or festivals—Apollo Pythios, Delios, Apollo Karneios etc.—firmly designate the god as owing at least part of his identity to a place or an occasion. If, then, in a modern *de facto* polytheistic system 'our' Panaghia is not the same as the Panaghia of the next village, it cannot be called reckless to at least consider the possibility that, in an overtly polytheistic concept, the Apollo belonging to one place is not necessarily—let alone "of course"—perceived as identical with the Apollo who is at home in another local or cultic context. Take Apollo Aguieus, very much the 'Apollo from right here', as his humble and mundane, often aniconic statue[201] can be found near doorposts, on street corners and in market places, receiving a cordial salutation from the local passers-by.[202] His identification with the august, omniscient and remote Apollo of Delphi, access to whom was only possible by investing in a long trip, can be achieved only at the loftiest summits of abstract theology.[203] Which leads us to the second—alternative—option.

---

[201] Which—another testimony of divine diversity—does not prevent an Aguieus from becoming the 'king' and eponymous god of the Thracian city of Kallatis (*IGR* I 656, ἐπὶ βασιλέος Ἀπόλλωνος Ἀγυέος, with L. Robert, Divinités Éponymes, *Hellenika* 2 (1946) 52 f.

[202] 'Quartiergott': Graf 1985, 368 f., where see the discussion. Cf. Parker 2005, 18. For the archaeological evidence *LIMC* II.I 327–332; II.2 279–283, confirming the aniconic character of the god often pictured as a simple pillar with a pointed top or even as flat ἀγυιεὺς βωμός, it being uncertain whether the aniconic statue is combined with an altar or identified with it. See: *RE* I.1 (1893) 909–913, Aguieus; J.P. Poe, The Altar in the Fifth Century Theater, *ClA* 8 (1989) 116–139, espec. 130–137; F. Fehrentz, Der antike Aguieus, *JDAI* 108 (1993) 123–196, with partially inadequate references (see: *SEG* 43.1288); Mastronarde *ad* Eur. *Phoen*. 631. More references in Pritchett 1998, 167–170. On *xoana* in general see: A.A. Donahue, *Xoana and the Origin of Greek Sculpture* (Atlanta 1988); Scheer 2000, 19–21, and the very informative article by J.-Chr. Vincent, Le *xoanon* chez Pausanias: littératures et réalités cultuelles, *DHA* 29 (2003) 31–75.

[203] A. Mehl, Religiöse Erziehung und Unterweisung in der griechischen Antike, in: M. Liedtke (ed.), *Religiöse Erziehung und Religionsunterricht* (Bad Heilbrun 1994) 67–86, espec. 69 f. (in the context of differentiation in mythical traditions): "Gott X an einem Ort war nicht identisch mit dem Gott desselben Namens an einem anderen Ort (….) Niemand kamm auf den Gedanken, Apoll in Delphi als den gerade Geborenen und in Delos als den Untierbezwinger zu verehren. So blieb eben der Glaubensinhalt bezüglich Apolls in beiden Orten verschieden." Cf. Chaniotis 2010, 126 f., who notes that of a group of graffiti from the gymnasium at Delphi (*SEG* 51.613–651) which record acclamations for Apollo (see below Ch. III n. 219) not a single acclamation invokes Apollo without his epithet Pythios, which clearly proves that locally

They may *but need not.* At the marketplace of ancient Corinth, Pausanias 2.2.8 tells us, you could see three statues of Zeus "one without surname, the second Chthonios, and the third they call Zeus Hypsistos (The Highest)" (τὸ μὲν ἐπίκλησιν οὐκ εἶχε, τὸν δὲ αὐτῶν Χθόνιον καὶ τὸν τρίτον καλοῦσιν Ὕψιστον).[204] Note how the first article is neuter and refers to the statue, while the other two are masculine and refer to the two named gods who are represented in the statues. What do we make of the trio at Corinth?[205] What would Herodotus have made of it? Three manifestations of one Zeus, three different Zeuses? How would the Corinthians have referred to them? As 'the three Zeuses'?[206]

---

this Apollo is viewed as a singular (and superior) Apollo as distinct from all other Apollines.

[204] Compare Paus. 8.22.2, who tells us that in Stymphalos the legendary Temenos founded three sanctuaries for the goddess Hera and gave her three epithets (ἐπικλήσεις): child, wife and widow. Here obviously the unity of the three Heras is articulated. Again of a different nature are the two images of Hera in the temple at Samos that are referred to as ἡ θεός and ἡ θεὸς ὄπισθεν ("the one behind" [in the opisthodomos?]) in the inscriptions, on which see: Scheer 2000, 133 f. in a chapter on the hierarchy of different cult images of one god. On double cults and temples of "a deity in two different aspects" see: T. Hadzisteliou Price, Double and Multiple Representations in Greek Art and Religious Thought, *JHS* 91 (1971) 48–69, espec. 53. On two temples for one god, one in the city and one in the *chora* of a community see: M. Jost, Sanctuaires ruraux et sanctuaires urbains en Arcadie, in: Schachter 1992, 205–245, espec. 228 ff. A dedication to 'Hera in the field' (*IG* XIV 643, 550 BC) suggests that there was another temple for Hera in the City. This city was Sybaris according to an attractive suggestion by R. Lucca, Ἥρα ἐν πεδίῳ: per la cultualità di Sibari, in: L. Braccesi (ed.), *Hesperìa* 4. *Studi sulla grecità da Occidente* (Rome 1994) 49–52. The sanctuary of this Hera ἐν ἀγρῷ (as she is called in Steph. Byz. s.v. Σύβαρις) was a place of immunity for slaves and possibly played a role in manumissions.

[205] And what do we make of the enormous list of Zeuses as manifest in statues at Olympia summed up by Paus. 5.22 ff., boasting: "I have enumerated the images of Zeus with the greatest accuracy." It is complicating that the statues are often simply referred to as 'Zeus', not 'the image/statue of Zeus'. People who do not refer to divine effigies as statues but as gods are censured by Plut. *Mor.* 379C–D, but this 'error' is common practice in Greek description: D. Clerc, *Les théories relatives au culte des images chez les auteurs grecs du IIe siècle après J.-C.* (Paris 1915); Gordon 1979 = 1996, espec. 7–10; Kassel 1983; D. Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago 1989) 28–48; Carney 2000, 28; Ando 2008, 21–42, espec. 22–27.

[206] Note the essential difference observable in the wooden statue of Zeus at Argos, which had three eyes, two at their natural place and one on the forehead. Paus. 2.24.3 explains the three eyes as referring to *one* Zeus who reigns in heaven, on earth and in the sea: "So the artist, whoever he was, represented Zeus with three eyes, because it is one and the same Zeus (τὸν αὐτὸν τοῦτον θεόν. Note the identical expression in Hdt. as cited above p. 73, with the same explicit emphasis on the oneness of the god) who reigns in all the three realms of nature, as they are called." See for ample bibliography of this Zeus *triophthalmos*: Pritchett 1998, 286. I. Leventi in *LIMC* VIII.1 (1997) 316, notes that Pausanias' classification accords with Zeus 'Ouranios, Chthonios, and

That, with these questions, I am not begging *the* question can be shown by some curious votive inscriptions. One, from Athens reads "to the Apollones" (Ἀπόλλωσιν). "Quid hoc sit non constat" ("What this is supposed to mean is not sure") wrote the editor Kirchner.[207] This now, to my mind, is a wonderfully apposite comment. An inscription from Aspendos includes a dedication "to the Aphroditai" (Ἀφροδείταις), another mentions "the Nemeseis,"[208] and at Troizen Pausanias 2.31.5 saw an altar of the Themides (βωμὸς Θεμίδων). Terms such as Aphroditai and Apollones suggest, to say the least, a plurality of separate, though similar and homonymous, individuals.[209] The Lindians at Rhodos with "Damateres" most likely referred to a combination of two different goddesses, who at Eleusis would be called Demeter and Kore, locally referred to as (the two goddesses) τὼ θεῶ.[210] The Despoinai

---

Enalios' and gives some more instances in nos. 52 and 72. Triple representations of one or three gods may have totally different settings: an entirely different triplicity in visual art is three gods united in one statue, as for instance described by Philodemus; head of Pan, body of Heracles, legs of Hermes (D. Sider, *The Epigrams of Philodemos* [New York – Oxford 1997] 169 no. 30).

[207] *IG* II² 1945, where Kirchner wonders "an significatur dedicatio deo Apolloni sub diversis nominibus honorato?" Two Apollones on a relief: L. Robert, *Hellenica* X, 126.

[208] L. Robert *Hellenica* XI–XII, 177–188 ff. discusses several types of double statues starting with the inscription from Aspendos Διὶ καὶ Ἥραι καὶ Ἀφροδείταις Καστνιήτισιν. On the Nemeseis of Smyrna, see: Hornum 1993, 11–14, and index s.v., with full bibliography on the different explanations of the duality. Confession texts from Maeonia present several acclamations to 'the Nemeseis'. See: H. Malay, *EA* 36 (2003) 16. Cf. a reference to 'goddesses' in an inscription of the sanctuary of the Great Mother in Peiraeus, on which see: Borgeaud 1996, 46 ff. and M.G. Lancellotti, *Attis Between Myth and History: King, Priest and God* (Leiden 2002) 64. Generally on double goddesses see: E. Simon, Doppelgöttinnen in Anatolien, Griechenland und Rom, *Eirene* 31 (1995) 69–87. The phenomenon is not restricted to, but certainly typical of Asia Minor in the Roman period. It reaches its acme in the Men-inscriptions: *CMRDM* I 155: τρὶς θ[εοὺς] Μῆνας, and 156: Μῆνας τόν τε οὐράνιον καὶ τοὺς καταχθονίους. Cf. Peterson 1926, 270. More recent examples: Petzl *BIWK* index s.v. Lawson 1910, 48 ff. records a prayer for rain from the mouth of an old wise-woman in modern Greece, addressed to "the god above and the god below" (τὸν ἄνο θεὸ καὶ τὸν κάτω θεό), but who could not recall the third one, the one who made it thunder. There is an early testimony that evokes the same imagery of one god multiplying himself, namely in Hes. *Scutum* 140 ff., where on the shield one god Phobos occurs four times, once pictured in the centre with Eris on "his grim brow," once in combination with Homados, once together with Deimos as seconds of Ares, and once sitting himself on the heads of the Gorgons.

[209] And they do not belong to "that whole class of divine beings whose nature is to appear as a collective and who are designated by the plural" (Burkert 1985, 173, in his section 3.2. on 'Societies of Gods'). See also Sineux 2006, 41.

[210] *I.Lindos* 183, where see: Blinkenberg comm. and M.P. Nilsson, *ARW* 32 (1935) 87 = *Opuscula selecta* 2 (Lund 1952) 552: "Die Bezeichnung Δαμάτερες, die m. W. sonst

in an inscription of Lykosoura (*IG* V 2 525, 2nd c. AD) are Demeter and Despoina.[211] Naturally, two Erides (Hesiod), two Artemides (Paus. 9.19.5),[212] as well as the two Nemeseis just mentioned,[213] the three Aglauroi,[214] and collectives such as the Nymphs, the Charites,[215] and the Eileithuiai may differ as to origin, nature and function.[216] For instance, it is unlikely that the Aphroditai from Aspendos are the sum total of Aphrodite Ouranios and Aphrodite Pandemos. However, despite these uncertainties,[217] the implications of plurals of one divine name, in particular the name of a great Olympian, cannot be disregarded in a discussion on polytheism.

---

nicht in Griechenland vorkommt und an das lateinische *Cereres* erinnert, lässt sich nur durch die Wesensidentität erklären; sie sind sozusagen die ältere und die jüngere Auflage derselben Gottheit." See also *GGR* I, 463, and Simon *o.c.* above n. 208. We do *not* know with certainty how to understand the Italic Cereres. See the discussion in G. Pugliese Carratelli, *Cereres*, *PP* 36 (1981) 367–372, who does not regard them as a translation of Δημήτερες, as representing Demeter and Kore, but as being similar to groups of gods such as the Eileithuiai or Roman Semones. The interpretation of Demeteres by H. Petersmann, Altgriechischer Mütterkult, in: G. Bauchhens & G. Neumann (edd.), *Matronen & verwandte Gottheiten. Ergebniss eines Kolloquiums etc.* (Bonn 1987) 171–199, als "uralte Einheit von Erde und Sonne" does not convince me. On Punic Cereres see below p. 110.

[211] Despoina, although generally the cult title of Persephone (Henrichs 1976, 259 n. 16) is not Kore here. See: Jost 1985, 333–337 on this goddess, and 297–356 generally on the complicated cultic identities of Arcadian Demeter and her circle (Kore, Despoina, the Great Goddesses): "à Éleusis, les Δημήτερες désignent Déméter et Koré du nom de la mère; à Lykosoura, les deux déesses doivent leur nom commun à Despoina" (334). There is also an altar for the Despoinai at Olympia (Paus. 6.15.4). Note that at Italian Locri Persephone seems to lack any association with Demeter but appears to have adopted several functions normally attributed to Demeter, as witness the famous clay relief plaques: Sourvinou-Inwood 1978; J.M. Redfield, *Locrian Maidens: Love and Death in Greek Italy* (Princeton 2005).

[212] Cf. an inscription in Lebadeia Ἀρτέμισι Ἱπραίαις (*IG* VII 3101).

[213] The list of different explanations of the multiplication of this goddess as cited by Hornum 1993 is frightening.

[214] A.N. Oikonomides, The Athenian Cults of the Three Aglauroi and Their Sanctuaries below the Acropolis of Athens, *Anc.W.* 21 (1990) 11–17.

[215] As for instance those worshipped at Orchomenos, see Burkert 1985, 174.

[216] T. Hadzisteliou Price, *o.c.* (above n. 204) 53 f., gives more evidence and lists different kinds of double deities. The Roman *Iunones* as adduced by Usener 1986, 299, are of a different nature, since every woman had her own Iuno just as every man his Genius.

[217] Sometimes, however, we do have explicit and unequivocal information. Hesiod *Cat.* fr. 23a 26, for instance, makes Artemis Einodia (= Iphimedeia) a servant of—hence distinct from—the goddess Artemis, and in *Cat.* 216, Apollo Nomios (= Aristaeus) is the son of Apollo. That we have landed here in the world of poetry does not detract from the fact that apparently such double identities were conceivable to the Greek mind.

Finally, Kallimachos offers a splendid example of how the two different positions, the monistic and the pluralistic, may co-exist in the work of one and the same author.[218] In his *Hymn to Apollo* 69–71, he presents the 'unitarian' idea:

> O Apollo, many call you Boedromios, many call you Klarios, you have many names everywhere, but I call you Karneios, since this is an ancestral custom.[219]

However, in *Iambos* 10 (Peiffer 200a) the other option comes to the fore:

> All the Aphrodites—*for the goddess is not one*—
> are surpassed in wit by the one from Kastinia.
>
> (Τὰς Ἀφροδίτας—ἡ θεὸς γὰρ οὐ μία—
> ἡ Καστνιῆτις τῷ φρονεῖν ὑπερφέρει)[220]

So once more: *they may, but need not*. To put it provocatively, gods bearing the same name with different epithets *were* and *were not* one and the same,[221] depending on their momentary registrations in the believer's various layers of perception. Theirs was a chameleonic

---

[218] I owe these references to Ivana Petrovic.

[219] The narrator comes from Cyrene, which was, according to legend, founded by Apollo Karneios. Compare also the opening lines of the *Hymn to Zeus*: "But how are we to sing him? As Diktaian or Lykaian? I hesitate between the two: each has its champions. Zeus, they say, you were born on the heights of Ida, and then again Zeus in Arcadia. Which ones are lying?" With this critical analysis Kallimachos is playing with the fixed hymnic strategies of polyonymy.

[220] The next line offers an explanation for this choice but, being in prose, must be the work of a commentator: "Because she alone allows the sacrifice of swine" (which is not as enlightening as one might wish). Such *explicit* enunciations that many homonymous gods, worshipped at—and hence named after—different places, are in fact conceived of as different personae are common in Hittite texts. At the end of a prayer addressed to the 'Weather god' or to the 'Sungoddess Hebat' characterized by a long list of lands or cities (the divine name being repeated every time with the new topographic predicate) may end with the summary "to all the weathergods" or "to all the Hebats." See G. Wilhelm in: Krebernik & van Oorschot 2002, 69 f. See also below n. 318.

[221] I used this expression in my 1999 lecture and am happy to find nearly the same in Mikalson 2005, 37: "The deities of Greek poetry, in a sense, both were (by name, physical appearance, and sometimes function) and were not (by local cult myths, rituals, and sometimes function) the deities whom each Greek personally worshipped." Mikalson in this first chapter, independently from my own research, briefly formulates his view on problems of divine identities on which he made occasional notes in earlier works (see below p. 525) and with which I very much agree. Cf. Auffarth 1994b, 19: "Die Götter [in contradistinction to locally determined heroes] dagegen gibt es in fast jedem Ort. Und doch sind es nicht die gleichen. Sie sind Teil des lokalen Pantheons, das in jeder Polis wieder anders zusammengesetzt ist."

nature, with different aspects or indeed identities rising to prominence and fading into the background in alternation, according to shifts in perspective. The name Zeus may evoke an infinite sequence of images, qualities and connotations, and the total of these qualities as expressed by epithets together may construct the 'sociogram' of the god.[222] However, as the linguist Wallace Chafe[223] argues: "at any given moment the human mind can focus on no more than a small segment of everything it knows." Both in speech-acts and in perception we have to allow for "sequences of different foci of consciousness." Accordingly, I would suggest that various different conceptions of the unity or diversity of gods with one name and different epithets or different residences are stored in the mind of a person, but that it is the shift in context—literary, social, regional—(or on the level of education)[224] that triggers a specific focus.[225] As Paul Veyne once wrote: "a worshipper who made a vow in pious affection did not think of the mythological biography of the god to whom he prayed for assistance. But if questioned he would

[222] "Die Summe der kultischen Epitheta des einzelnen Gottes stellt so etwas wie ein Soziogramm der kultischen Realität dar, näher an den Interessen der Glaübigen als mythologische Spekulationen" (Gladigow 1983, 13).

[223] Chafe 1994, 140. *Idem*, The Deployment of Consciousness in the Production of a Narrative, in W. Chafe (ed.), *The Pear Stories: Cognitive, Cultural, and Linguistic Aspects of Narrative Production* (Norwood NJ 1980) argues that the origin of this lies in human evolution. Each focus of consciousness embraces just enough information to be effective in terms of the human organism's basic needs. We shall return to this phenomenon in Ch. II. It is closely related to the principle of 'information overload': as a rule people make choices and decisions without being able to analyse all available information (D. Kahneman, P. Slovic & A. Tversky (edd.), *Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases* [New York 1982]).

[224] I hesitate, though, as will be clarified in Ch. II, to make an all-too-rigorous distinction between 'popular' religion and the religion of poets, historians and philosophers.

[225] In the words of Ph. Borgeaud, Manières grecques de nommer les dieux, *Colloquium Helveticum* 23 (1996) 19–36, espec. 23: "Un dieu, en effet, c'est toujours des dizaines d'aspects et de fonctions partagés et contrastés avec ceux d'autres dieux. Un dieu, tel qu'il apparaît dans la relation rituelle, constitue donc un point nodal, conjoncturel et problématique. C'est dans la relation concrète de l'interlocuteur à la puissance, que s'opère le classement du panthéon, et donc de nomination." This free alternation of identities is not restricted to polytheistic Greece. In a discussion of Zeus of Carmel/of Heliopolis (modern Baalbek) F. Millar, *The Roman Near East, 31 BC–AD 337* (Cambridge Mass.–London 1993), 270, says that the god was "whatever his worshipper said he was." Cf. *ibid.* 249 on Dolichenus: "His worshippers could literally make of him what they would." T. Kaizer (ed.), *The Variety of Local Religious Life in the Near East in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods* (Leiden 2008) focusses on similar phenomena.

speak on this mythical aspect."[226] And I would argue that Greeks (like other representatives of traditional, 'pre-modern' cultures) used to focus on that particular segment of divine identities that was contextually marked or momentarily required, while simultaneously closing their eyes to different, rival and often incompatible images in the sociogram of the god in question.

A way out

In Appendix II, on 'unity or diversity', the reader will find a summary and an assessment of a debate on the type of polytheistic complexities under discussion between two modern scholars who hold radically contrasting views, each contesting the other's view as incompatible with her/his own (correct) one. In other words both of them take a firm and exclusivistic stance in our modern Western 'separative cosmology,'[227] which does not allow two contrasting incompatible truths to co-exist peacefully and which has no room for ambiguities. Contrarily, I would propose that one might, just *might*, consider a third option.[228] This

---

[226] Veyne 1986, 280 in my translation. Cf. below p. 85. This is one instance of what Veyne 1983 coined 'Balkanisation of the brain', being the way in which different 'beliefs' occurred side by side, in unconscious competition but without denying each other's right of existence. Similar views had been developed long before in other disciplines. William James, *The Principles of Psychology* II (New York 1890) 277 ff. in a section on "The various orders of reality," speaking of 'sub-universes' writes: "The popular mind conceives of all these sub-worlds more or less disconnectedly; and when dealing with one of them forgets for the time being its relation to the rest." The sociologist Alfred Schütz, *Collected Papers* I, *The Problem of Social Reality* (The Hague 1962) 207–259, "On multiple realities", prefers to speak of "finite provinces of meaning" but means the same. Recent research suggests that people are able to appeal simultaneously to different "non-linguistic chunked mental models." Thus R.G. D'Andrade, Schemas and Motivation, in: R. D'Andrade & C. Strauss (edd.), *Human Motives and Cultural Models* (Cambridge 1992) 23 f., who uses the expression "parallel distributed processing." Along these lines, in one of his revolutionary papers, Maurice Bloch, Language, Anthropology and Cognitive Science, *Man* 26 (1991) 183–198, espec. 191, argues that knowledge is organised in a way that is not "language-like." Knowledge is made accessible "through a number of processing units which work in parallel and feed in information simultaneously." All these approaches, as well as others, will be of much avail in the present book.

[227] I adopt here terms and concepts introduced by Oudemans & Lardinois 1987 and will return to this in several chapters of this book.

[228] As noted time and again I do not claim originality in this respect. See for instance Buxton 1994 as quoted below in Appendix II, n. 25, who on p. 196, arguing for the 'provocative ambiguity' of myths, in his turn acknowledges indebtedness to "the superlative introduction to Versnel 1990." So in brief: we agree. Cf. also Jost 1992, 15, who rightly stresses that side by side with the common imagery of the pantheon, largely an inheritance from the past, the cultic personalities of gods differed widely from place to

implies venturing for a moment into the Greek 'interconnected cosmology', which does not compulsively avoid ambiguities, and accepting that (the) Greeks had to live with two (or more) indeed mutually exclusive realities *and yet coped with the inherent paradoxes and inconsistencies*. There cannot be any doubt that mythical and (local) cultic personae of a god might diverge dramatically. While attending a tragedy,[229] admiring a mythical scene in visual art, or listening to a mythical tale, one would (in fact one was contextually forced to) identify with a world of mythical identities that were ingrained in everybody from early childhood. This temporarily determined the focus and wiped local identities off the screen. When confronted in cult with the local and functionally specialized—and, through their nearness, more familiar—gods with their surnames, the focus shifted and temporarily pushed the imagery of the mythical god to the background. Indeed as Veyne[230] wrote: "a mental cleft separated gods as mythical figures from the gods as objects of the piety of the believers." Yet (the) Greeks managed to cope with these two religious realities, both stored in their

---

place. Finally, poets and thinkers adapt the gods to their own concepts of the universe. "Ce sont donc des approches divers des dieux et des héros qu'il faut confronter si l'on veut dépasser l'image stéréotypée d'un panthéon simple et cohérent." One must all the more regret the deafening silence on the at the time refreshing viewpoints of Rowe 1976, 48. Discussing the opposition between Guthrie, who saw a contradictory chaos in the many aspects of Apollo, and Walter Otto's unitarian vision: "In Apollo all the splendour of the Olympic converges," Rowe finds that Otto was involved in just the same type of exercise as Hesiod, namely that of attempting to mitigate, in a creative way, the apparent chaos and disunity of Greek religious ideas. He concludes: "I am not sure therefore that Guthrie's view that there are unresolved contradictions in the character of Apollo, or of Dionysos, is necessarily mutually incompatible with Otto's attempt at conciliation; for they simply belong to different spheres of discourse." In general terms Feeney 1998, 23, quoting Bloch 1989, 109, writes: "It is by no means clear that we may view any culture a 'historically constructed system of cognition which is coherent, all-encompassing and non-individual'."

[229] Which is not the same as fully appreciating or even so much as fully understanding the text. R.W. Wallace, Speech, Song and Text, Public and Private, in: Eder 1995, 199–217, espec. 204, on the basis of a host of contemporary testimonies (*not* restricted to Aristophanean comedy!) concludes that: "In the second half of the fifth century the Athenians came to realize that, despite the power and the beauty of their traditional poetry, in fact they did not actually understand it." Cf. A.W. Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens* (Oxford 1968[2]) 261: "It may be that the obscurity imparted to the words of the tragic choruses was one, among others, of the causes of its rapid decline in the fourth century. Poets might not care to compose what their hearers could not follow."

[230] "Un abîme mental séparait les dieux comme figures mythologiques et les dieux comme objets de la piété des fidèles:" *Annuaire Collège de France* 76 (1976) 371. See his statement quoted above, p. 84. Cf. Henrichs 1976, 261; Pleket 1981, 177.

mental stock, by shifting from one to another and back, whenever the context or situation required it.[231]

The fact that e.g. Zeus Meilichios is not the same god as Zeus Olympios is *inter alia* corroborated by aspects of his iconography; that in other respects the gods may have been understood as having the same identity is suggested by the common name. Different *and* the same. We have seen it before and will see it time and again. In the domain of religion (the) Greeks had no insurmountable problems with double identities up till the moment that they were questioned on it. The questions, however, are ours. One of the theses added to a Dutch dissertation[232] runs: "Whoever finds chaos has been on the lookout for structure." This is very true and indeed typical of our paradigm. Its corollary is worse. When, while on the lookout for order, we run up against a contradiction (which is another word for chaos in our paradigm) it is our late-modern craving to remove the inconsistency as quickly and radically as possible. We will amply return to this modern epidemic in our following chapters. Contrarily, the anthropologist S.R. Barrett defines contradiction as "the basis of social life."[233] Whoever cannot accept that living with contradictions is possible, for instance

---

[231] And so it could happen that when the best of the workmen involved in the construction of the Propylaea was terribly injured and given up by the doctors, the goddess (ἡ θεός = *the* Athena herself) appeared in a dream, saved him, and that next Perikles erected a statue for Athena Hygeia at the place where she had already an older altar (Plut. *V.Per.* 13.12–13) whose base may have been found with the inscription: "The Athenians to Athena Hygieia" (A.E. Raubitchek, *Dedications from the Athenian Acropolis* [Cambridge Mass. 1949] no. 166). There we find her flanked by a statue of Hygieia, who may have been an offshoot of the same Athena Hygieia and must have been very difficult to keep apart from her. See on this dilemma: Graf 1985, 216 f.; Chr. Auffarth, in: Eder 1995, 353 ff. Things are not so simple as some modern scholars would like to have them!

[232] G. Alberts, *Jaren van berekening; toepassingsgerichte initiatieven in de Nederlandse wiskunde-beoefening, 1945–1960* (Amsterdam 1998).

[233] *The Rebirth of Anthropological Theory* (Toronto – London 1984). The quotation is the title of the second section of his book. Its three chapters, 'Contradictions in everyday life', 'Neutralizing mechanisms' and 'The illusion of simplicity', can be viewed as a manifesto and make for fascinating reading. At p. 150, he adds: "That picture will not resemble the neat and tidy systems of opposition characteristic of Lévi-Straussian structuralism. Instead the emphasis will be on a world of 'cluttered contradictions', themselves at times messy, loosely integrated, ambiguously located, and devoid of ultimate rational design. If this view makes the philosophical hair of French rationalism stand on end and drives logicians zany, *the only solace to be offered is that it moves us closer to the actual character of life itself*" (my italics). Cf. C. Geertz, *Works and Lives. The Anthropologist as Author* (Stanford 1988) 143, who speaks of the "Lévi-Straussian rage for order."

because they "make nonsense of the way in which meaning is created out of images," as Sourvinou-Inwood wrote (see below p. 521), I would remind of the different foci of consciousness that we mentioned earlier: "at any given moment the human mind can focus on no more than a small segment of everything it knows."[234] Or one might read a book on the psychological manoeuvres to avoid, or cope with, cognitive dissonance.[235] But perhaps reading the following section of this chapter may help, too.

These introductory reflections confront us with a first instance of ambiguity resulting from a multiple-perspective view and the concomitant different layers of discourse. Not the last, since it will be one of the recurrent issues in the following chapters. At any rate, the complications emerging from the 'multiperspectiveness' introduced so far, should give cause to at least some reserve concerning attempts at devising one monolithical overall structure in Greek polytheism. Such a device may be relatively easy to accomplish with one Zeus, one Apollo, and one Athena. However, when it comes to accommodating dozens of gods with one name but displaying mutually discordant features as *inter alia* manifest in their respective epithets, into one universal scheme, problems become insurmountable. *Greeks* may have tried to create unity and order in the diversity of religious conceptions, striving to compose a menu of these ingredients, *the Greeks* mostly improvised *à la carte*.

The essential question, however, is whether we should (dis)qualify a *menu à la carte* as chaos. Jonathan Z. Smith once wrote: "The historian's task is to complicate, not to clarify." I suggest we accept this challenge. For we have not nearly finished our quest for complications. They appear to emerge ever more forcefully as inevitable companions of the devices for structuring the pantheon to which we shall now turn.

---

[234] In *Science* (December 4th 1998) attention is drawn to the co-existence of two dominant features of consciousness. One is 'unity'. A conscious experience can consist only of one indivisible 'scene', as the human mind cannot pay attention to two different experiences or propositions simultaneously. The other is 'differentiation': each stage of consciousness consists in the omission of all other states of consciousness. The two potentially incompatible features rest in different parts of the thalamus and cortex, one regulating perception and cognition, the other steering memory, assessment, opinion, planning. Let us just recall these two qualities of the human mind. They are good to think with.

[235] I discussed and amply used this theory in Versnel 1990, introduction.

3. Creating Order: Taking Place

1. *"The gods who dwell in our city"*

To say "Our Mother of the Gods is autochthonous; she is not the same as the one from Asia Minor," is an act of disarrangement undermining the greater unity suggested by the common name. But at the same time it implies a new arrangement, a different order in another perspective. One of the questions asked to establish Athenian citizenship in the examination of a candidate for the archonship was whether he had "an Apollo Patroios and a Zeus Herkeios, and (if so) where these sanctuaries were located" (εἰ ἔστιν αὐτῷ Ἀπόλλων πατρῷος καὶ Ζεὺς ἑρκεῖος, καὶ ποῦ ταῦτα τὰ ἱερά ἐστιν).[236] The two gods, clearly disconnected from their Olympian namesakes and their pantheon, appear to play a major role in the construction of another type of meaningful coherence: the cultural definition of one's place of belonging. It is time to pay more attention to this aspect because here we descry a first rudimentary, natural and unsophisticated way of creating order in a potential chaos.

In a late fourth century decree from Kolophon[237] the inhabitants wish to extend the city wall "to enclose the old city within the same wall as

---

[236] [Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 55.3, with P.J. Rhodes, *A Commentary on the Aristotelian* Athenaion Politeia (Oxford 1993) *ad loc.* Cf. Dem. 57.54. Harpocr. s.v. explains that Apollo Patroos earned his name from the fact that he was regarded as the common ancestor of the Athenians through the founding hero Ion. On this god and his functions see: *GGR* I, 556 f.; *RE* 18 (1949) 2225–2259, s.v. Patroioi Theoi (Aly); X. de Schutter, Le culte d'Apollon Patrôos à Athènes, *AC* 56 (1987) 103–129; M. Valdés Guía, El culto de Apolo Patroos en las fratrias, *Gerión* 12 (1994) 45–61 (the cult was instituted by Solon). More recently R.D. Cromey, Apollo Patroos and the Phratries, *AC* 75 (2006) 41–69, dissociates Apollo Patroos from the membership of a phratry (also arguing that his cult was instituted in the fourth century), but this does not affect the implications of the passage cited. On the junction of Apollo Patroios and Zeus Herkeios see below p. 111.

[237] B.D. Meritt, Inscriptions of Colophon, *AJPh* 35 (1935) 359–397; *SEG* 19.698, ll. 9–12; L. Robert, Décrets de Kolophon, *RPh* 10 (1936) 158–168, = *OMS* II (1969) 1237–1247; F.G. Maier, *Griechische Mauerbauinschriften* (Heidelberg 1959) no. 69. The inscription is a modern scholars' pet, oft cited for its range of implications. See: I. Malkin, *Religion and Colonization in Ancient Greece* (Leiden 1987) 151 f. (Greek texts and translation); Detienne-Sissa 1989, 202 f.; N. Demand, *Urban Relocation in Archaic and Classical Greece* (Norman Okl. 1990) 161 f.; S.G. Cole, Demeter in the Ancient Greek City and its Countryside, in: Alcock & Osborne 1994, 199–216, espec. 199 f.; *eadem*, Civic Cult and Civic Identity, in: M.H. Hansen (ed.), *Sources for the Ancient Greek City-State. Acts of the Copenhagen Polis Centre* 2 (1995) 292–325, espec. 296; Price 1999, 48 f.; I. Polinskaya 2006 ff., who convincingly argues that like other similar formulas this does not imply a conscious indigenous classification of deities

the existing city, which the gods had handed over to our ancestors."[238] In order to arrange this,

> the priests are to go down to the old agora and at the altars of the gods that our ancestors left behind for us, they are to pray to Zeus Soter, Poseidon Asphaleios (Who Brings Security), Apollo of Klaros, Mother Antaia, Athena Polias, and to all the other gods and goddesses and to the heroes *who dwell in our city and land* (καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις θεοῖς πᾶσι καὶ πάσαις καὶ τοῖς ἥρωσι οἱ κατέχουσιν[239] ἡμῶν τήν τε πόλιν καὶ τὴν χώραν).

Apparently gods (and heroes)[240] have domiciles, residences, in addition or as opposed to their mythically determined abode on Mount Olympus or their politically centralized (pan-)Hellenic cult centres. To disregard the watershed between these categories is a guaranteed recipe for misunderstanding the working of Greek polytheism. Gods are omnipresent in one perspective, while from a different point of view they live on Mount Olympus. In yet another context, however, they are supposed to live 'right here' in their local sanctuaries. Modern scholars' difficulties in coming to terms with the (psycho)logical inconsistencies involved can be exemplarily illustrated with a passage written by such an admirable scholar as W.K. Pritchett 1998, 181:

> The divinity was not thought to dwell continually in his temple but only to sojourn there occasionally; see the commentary of L.R. Farnell on Pind. *Pyth*. 4.5, who notes the technical use of ἀποδημίαι and ἐπιδημίαι for the periodic departures and visitations of the gods. The frequent

---

into city and country ones. The formula embraces the whole of the land and all of the local pantheon. Cf. on the political aspects of this duality e.g. L. Robert, Documents d'Asie Mineure, *BCH* 109 (1985) 470 f.; de Polignac 1995.

[238] The implicit purpose may be that in this way the city is more secure of the protection of these gods. Comparably, as Hdt. 1.26 reports, during an attack on their city the Ephesians dedicated their city to the goddess of the city by connecting her temple to the city by means of a rope. And with success, as Polyaenos *Strat.* 6.50 testifies.

[239] The verb (together with others) is a fixed terminus to indicate 'have in possession' or 'be at home somewhere'. See: Keyssner 1932, 77 f., and *LSJ* s.v. Barré 1983, 93 ff., admits that the verb may have both meanings but prefers 'to dwell in' as the correct meaning in the oath of Hannibal and Philippos (see below. p. 108). In the cult inscriptions of Lydia and Phrygia of the imperial period, on the other hand, the notion of 'having power over' is arguably dominant: P. Herrmann, Men, Herr von Axiotta, in: S. Sahin (ed.), *Studien zur Religion und Kultur Kleinasiens. Festschr. F.K. Dörner* I (Leiden 1978) 415–423, espec. 421 ff.; Pleket 1981, 174–178; S. Hübner *o.c.* (above n. 152) 187 f.; Belayche 2006. See also below Ch. III n. 180.

[240] At first sight, the phrasing of this inscription might suggest that there is a differentiation between *all the gods* on one side and the *heroes who live amongst us* on the other. As the abundant parallels adduced below indicate this is most probably not intended. See further below nn. 280 and 284.

> epiphanies of deities presupposed that they did not remain permanently in their temples. Their home was on Mount Olympos.

What we see here is a desperate attempt to disentangle and split up a 'polytopic' conception of divine residence into separate, mutually exclusive, images of divine commuting between alternating abodes. However, in the practice of religious imagery the Greeks lived—and coped—with an unravelled knot of synchronous but in their synchrony incompatible notions. Albeit all simultaneously *true*, they are not—and cannot be—simultaneously operative. In other words, we have here an exemplary instance of "sequences of different foci of consciousness."

First of all, explicit attribution of *epidemia* and *apodemia* is restricted to only few gods, especially in the context of oracular activity.[241] Apollo's *epidemia* in the form of his annual return from the Hyperboreans (or other distant places but not from the Olympus) was every year ritually celebrated in his cultic centres at Delos and Delphi. About departure, on the other hand, no word.[242] Although an arrival logically presupposes a preceding period of absence, as a rule this *apodemia* is not ritually validated. Several gods used to (re-)appear annually, especially in springtime, without having performed a marked act of departure before.[243] No closure of sanctuaries,[244] no suspension of prayer and sacrifice. Although absent if viewed from one perspective, the god nonetheless is and remains present

---

[241] Schol. C 1 (ii, 49 Pf) *ad* Call. *Ap*. 13 λέγεται δὲ τῶν μαντευομένων θεῶν τὰ θεῖα καὶ ἐπιδημεῖν καὶ ἀποδημεῖν. καὶ ὅταν μὲν ἐπιδημῶσιν, τὰς μαντείας ἀληθεῖς εἶναι· ὅταν δὲ ἀποδημῶσι, ψευδεῖς.

[242] As for instance noted by W. Burkert, Katagogia-Anagogia and the goddess of Knossos, in: Hägg 1988, 81–87, espec. 84.

[243] See: W. Burkert *o.c.* (preceding note), briefly on *epidemiai* of Apollo, Dionysos and Demeter and Persephone. Especially on the *katagogiai* of Dionysos, recently (with bibliography and daring interpretations): I. Tassignon, Dionysos et les Katagogies d'Asie Mineure, in: A. Motte & Ch. Ternes (edd.), *Dieux, fêtes, sacré dans la Grèce et la Rome antiques* (Turnhout 2003) 80–99, who announces a dissertation on the subject.

[244] I am not referring here to the regular rules concerning (prohibition of) access to temples as for instance discussed by J.W. Hewitt, Major Restrictions on Access to Greek Temples, *TAPhA* 40 (1909) 83–92; P.E. Corbett, Greek Temples and Greek Worshippers: The Literary and Archaeological Evidence, *BICS* 17 (1970) 149–158; P.A. Butz, Prohibitory Inscriptions, *xenoi*, and the Influence of the Early Greek *Polis,* in: Hägg 1995, 75–95. More generally on these and related aspects: F.G. Naerebout, "Na het eten van kaas een dagje wachten." Territorialiteit in de Griekse religie, *Lampas* 37 (2004) 309–325; *idem*, Territorialität und griechische Religion. Die aufgeteilte Landschaft, in: E. Olshausen & V. Sauer (edd.), *Die Landschaft und die Religion. Stuttgarter Kolloquium zur Historischen Geographie des Altertums* 9 (2005) 191–213, espec. 207 f. Nor do I speak of brief periods of interruption of temple cult in periods of social stagnation as for instance in periods of death or pollution.

from another point of view.[245] Nor is his residence permit for Olympus regarded as being suspended during his annual sojourn abroad. To make sense of all this, we should abandon the image of commuting gods and open our eyes to the mental reality of shifting foci.[246]

Epiphanies, for that matter, far from proving a structurally preceding temporary withdrawal from the local temple, rather testify to the complexity of a multifocal imagery of divine residence. Similar to the focal imbalance between *epidemia* and *apodemia*, epiphany reports—in accordance with the term *epiphaneia*—are exclusively concerned with the place of appearance. They have no interest in and therefore rarely mention the place of the god's departure.[247] And the places where they appear may vary far and wide. "Gods may roam our cities in guise of strangers from afar," we read in Homer. Dionysos, during his journey from India, appeared in epiphany wherever he arrived, the Dioskouroi came to the rescue of people in peril all over the world. On the other hand, Apollo emphatically manifested himself in his own temple through epiphanies of various kinds in 279, as did Artemis Leukophryene in Magnesia 207, and Athena in her own temple at Lindos (early 5th c. BC), as well as many others.[248] As we shall discuss in Chapter V, while Asklepios' *epiphaneiai* prevail as a standard phenomenon in his own sanctuary at Epidauros,[249] the god also frequently appeared at other places not connected with his cult. One night he was unable to come to his sanctuary at Troizen because he was busy in Epidauros,[250] and so he turned up in Troizen only the next night. In the final part of

---

[245] This is apparent from precisely the *apodemia* of Apollo from Delphi. His 'absence' does not prevent him from giving oracles when necessary (see the scholion quoted above n. 241) but "serves rather to provide a convenient excuse for those occasions on which the oracle did not prove correct," thus B.K. Braswell, *A Commentary on the Fourth Pythian Ode of Pindar* (Berlin etc. 1988), *ad* l.5 (p.66). So, too, L.R. Farnell (as cited by Pritchett) on Pind. *Pyth.* 4.5, and P.A. Bernardini, *Pindaro. Le Pitiche* (Milano 1995) *ad. loc.*

[246] Cf. the splendid example of 'multilocality' in Hittite religion below n. 318.

[247] Apart from incidental cases, the only exceptions are the mythical epiphany legends about Dionysos' arrival, where India is often mentioned as place of departure. They are however of a different nature than the average (cultic) epiphany.

[248] See my *Epiphaneia* forthcoming. Also Brackertz 1976, index s.v. epiphany, on city-gods appearing in their own cities and temples.

[249] Which was famous for its ἐπιφάνεια. Strabo 8.6.15, καὶ αὕτη δ' οὐκ ἄσημος ἡ πόλις καὶ μάλιστα διὰ τὴν ἐπιφάνειαν τοῦ Ἀσκληπίου, which A.D. Nock translated as "the constant visitation to do miracles," but which certainly implied his habit to appear, in visible form or in dreams.

[250] The text has literally "because he did not have his *epidemia* there (οὐκ ἐπιδαμοῦντος αὐτοῦ) but was in Epidauros." See Ch. V, p. 403.

Isyllos' paean to Apollo and Asklepios,[251] the god "came to the rescue of the Spartans from Epidaurus," where, apparently, he was supposed to live, as also appears from the fact that he ordered a patient to wait there for his return.[252]

What these testimonies show is *not* that gods travel from Olympos to different places, but that they freely manifest themselves in corporeal visibility at any place that accords with the expectancy of the believers, not surprisingly very much including places where they are deemed to have their fixed domicile.[253] Their apparitions in or around their own temples signify that their 'normal' presence is now manifesting itself in a singularly miraculous and specifically divine fashion. If we consider the notion of 'commuting,' this notion should not be taken in terms of gods in the act of changing place,[254] but just as in the case of *epidemia,* in terms of perspectival shifts in the mind of the believer. It depended on *his/her* needs and preferences, to decide whether a god was present

---

[251] E. Diehl, *AL* II 6 113–118; Furley and Bremer 2001, no. 6.4E.

[252] Comparably, Herakles, though "he performed marvellous deeds (θαυμαστά) at Gadira (.....), has often been seen playing with balls of Heraklean proportions in his own temple. (....) The noise which they create is audible and they are moved by him from one side of the building to the other" (Aristid. *Or.* 40 [Herakles] 12 f.).

[253] Cf. C. Higbie, *The Lindian Chronicle and the Greek Creation of their Past* (Oxford 2003) 264, discussing expressions of *epiphaneia* of Asklepios in Epidaurus and Athena at Lindos: "In neither instance does the phrase refer to any specific appearance of the god, but rather expresses an understanding that the divinity, in some sense, resides in the sanctuary, and permeates it with his or her presence." Yet, in the first *epiphaneia* recorded on the fourth column, we see the same goddess Athena who is normally residing in her temple, also appear in a dream *and* travel to her father Zeus to ask him a favour for her city.

[254] Although gods may travel. Poseidon in *Od.* 1. 22 ff., was abroad and hence could not hear what the gods discussed on mount Olympos. Yet, if he wished,—that is, if a literary or religious context required it—a god could hear wherever he happened to be (*Il.* 16.514 ff. δύνασαι δὲ σὺ πάντοσ' ἀκούειν; Aesch. *Eum.* 297: κλύει δὲ καὶ πρόσωθεν ὢν θεός, cf. 397; Ar. *Nub.* 269–274. See commentaries for parallels). On the other hand, to praise Apollo Grannus as the god 'who listens to prayers always and everywhere' (*SEG* 35.589: αἰεὶ καὶ πανταχοῦ ἐπηκόῳ) hints at the shortcomings of other gods in this respect, as Chaniotis 2010, 137 notes. *And* a god could visit his local temple in order to be out of reach of divine communication from Olympos, as Demeter did in Eleusis. See Richardson 1974, *ad* l. 27 ff. for further inconsistencies of this type. Cf. Hera, who kept herself far from the abode of Zeus and "stayed in her temples where many pray and delighted in her offerings" (*H.Apollo* 347–8). There is a good introductory discussion of such excrescences of anthropomorphism and their limits in Rudhardt 1958, 80–101.

in his temple,[255] *or* sojourned on Olympos,[256] *or* vaporized into a more abstract imagery of omnipresence.[257]

There is a fine illustration of convergence *and* differentiation of these three types of localisation in one story about gods and heroes as *summachoi* in the naval battle at Salamis (480 BC). Hdt. 8.64.2 tells how the Greeks decided

> to pray to the gods and to call upon the Aiakides [sons of Aiakos, here including Aiakos himself] to help them as *summachoi*. And so they did: they prayed to all the gods (πᾶσι τοῖσι θεοῖσι), and from right there, i.e. from Salamis (αὐτόθεν μὲν ἐκ Σαλαμῖνος), they called up Aiax and Telamon, and in order to fetch Aiakos (ἐπὶ δὲ Αἰακόν) and the other Aiakides they sent a ship to Aegina.

Here we have it all: "the gods," without specification and not topographically determined, are supposed to be omnipresent; Aiax and Telamon being residents of Salamis are self-evidently present[258] and immediately available as allies, and the Aiakides are, in a more corporeal imagery (most probably *in imagine*)[259] fetched by ship.[260] The

---

[255] The temple was his house (αὐλαί: Eur. *Ion* 184–6; οἰκήματα: Hdt. 8.144), where he lived (οἰκοδομεῖν: Ar. *Av.* 611–615, and see commentaries). All this of course, is also connected with the vexed problem of the equation of *agalma* and god. See above n. 205 and below n. 389.

[256] The two images alternate when the *knise* of the Olympian sacrifice rises to heaven to feed the gods, while after the sacrifice a *trapeza* is laid and heaped with titbits where the same gods are supposed to have a bite. On this extensively below Chapter IV.

[257] It should be noted that the invocations to come and listen, as we find them stereotypically in prayers, have their focus on the speaker's presence, and are not indicative of the place where the god is supposed to be at the moment of prayer (cf. Scheer 2001, 36). Significantly, Zeus is the only god who is never asked to come, but is supposed to act from his central position (West *ad* Hes. *Op.* 2, p. 138), which concurs with the fact that, in the older Greek cities, Zeus was the only Olympian god who was denied the privilege of being a city-patron. See: Brackertz 1976, 93 f.

[258] At Hdt. 5.66.2, Kleisthenes, for this reason, calls Aiax "a neighbour and an ally" (ἀστυγείτονα καὶ σύμμαχον).

[259] So How and Wells *ad loc.* Cf. Pritchett 1979, 15–18. That this is well conceivable may appear from Hdt. 5.80: The Thebans, pressed hard by the Athenians, asked help from the Aeginaetans, who replied that they would send the Aiakidai (τοὺς Αἰακίδας συμπέμπειν) in aid. As these heroes proved of little avail, the Thebans returned the Aiakidai (τοὺς Αἰακίδας ἀπεδίδοσαν), which presupposes a presence in the form of images. See: Van Compernolle *o.c.* next note.

[260] In 8.83.2–84.2 that ship arrived back just at the moment that the battle was to begin and the Aeginaetans contend that it was this ship that opened the battle. Later it was told (Plut. *Them.* 15.1) that the Aiakides had been seen in the air joining the Athenians in their fight. With this the Aiakides belong to a fixed type of divine or heroic *promachoi/summachoi*, who are called upon (ἐπικαλεῖσθαι) and are believed to fight in person together with their mortal supplicants. Just as Diod. Sic. 8

author of a hymn for Demetrios Poliorketes (290 BC) that we shall discuss in our final chapter, probably inspired by Epicurean theology, focuses on the negative aspects of divine distance (in an undetermined way) and nearness (in the form of statues) and prefers the living Demetrios, because he is present:

> Now know that other gods are far away, or have no ears or don't exist or do not care about us. But thee, we see here present: not wood, nor stone but real to the bone.

It is not the gods who decide where they are or from where they arrive. It is the mortal manipulator, who may even claim the authority to decide who *is* god and who is not.

After this brief preliminary introduction into religious multiperspectiveness—an issue that will be at the heart of this book—we must return to the topic broached in this section, that of gods in a local perspective, as 'our' gods. No testimony is more explicit than a votive inscription to the goddess Nemesis at Rhamnous: "to *this* goddess *here* who owns *this* sanctuary *here*" (θεᾶι τῆιδε ἢ τόδ' ἔχει τέμενος).[261] Did the person who commissioned this text ever ponder the possibility that his goddess occasionally might move to another place (including Mount Olympos)? The same emphatic deictic locative is used by Socrates during an outing in the countryside,[262] where he prays: "Dear Pan and you other gods who dwell in this place" (ὦ φίλε Πάν τε καὶ

---

fr.32 and Iustin. 20.2 f. tell that the citizens of Locri Epizephyrii, having heard from the Spartans that the only *summachoi* they had on offer were the Tyndarides, sailed back home having placed a *kline* on board as if transporting (and entertaining) the gods. On these legends of Ajax and the Dioskouroi see: R. van Compernolle, Ajax et les Dioscures au secours des Locriens, in: *Hommages à Marcel Renard* (Bruxelles 1969) 733–766. On gods and heroes as 'Schlachtenhelfer': W. Speyer, Die Hilfe und Epiphanie einer Gottheit, eines Heroen und eines Heiligen in der Schlacht, in: *Pietas. Festschrift B. Kötting* = *JbAC, Ergänzungsband* 6 (1980) 55–77, with the Aiakos-legend at p. 64 f.; Pritchett 1979, 11–46. E. Fraenkel, *Aeschylus Agamemnon*, comm. *ad* 810, p. 373, lists literary testimonia of people praying that gods will be their *summachoi*. On the Aiakides: P. von der Mühll, *Der grosse Aias. Rektoratsprogram Univ. Basel* (1930) = *Ausgew. Schr.* (Basel 1976) 435–472, with the story of the battle at Salamis at p. 452 f. Cf. on the role of the Aiakides in the battle of Salamis: Kearns 1989, 44–47; Mikalson 2003, 22 f.; 129 ff.

[261] *IG* I^3 1021; *SEG* 10.341; Lazzarini 1976, no. 643. On (the temple of) Nemesis at Rhamnous see: Hornum 1993, 10 f.; *LIMC* V.1 pp. 733 f.; B. Knittlmayer, Kultbild und Heiligtum der Nemesis von Rhamnous am Beginn des Peloponnesischen Krieges, *JDAI* 114 (1999) 1–18, also on the changing character of the goddess from deity of revenge towards a protective and helpful goddess.

[262] Pl. *Phaedr.* 279 BC, with thanks to Alex Kovacs. Note that the deictic particle is used twice before in the same context.

ἄλλοι ὅσοι τῇδε θεοί). The other gods referred to here appear to be the Nymphs, who are, like Pan, often pictured as goddesses in close vicinity or 'here'.[263] "You who live here in our land" (ἔγχωροι κατοικοῦσαι) is how they are addressed in a formula of a magical handbook.[264]

We have touched here on an essential feature of Greek polytheism, with far-reaching implications. Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.14.1. tells us that

> in the time of Kekrops, they say, the gods decided to take possession of cities in which each of them should receive his own peculiar worship (ἐπὶ τούτου, φάσιν, ἔδοξε τοῖς θεοῖς πόλεις καταλαβέσθαι, ἐν αἷς ἔμελλον ἔχειν τιμὰς ἰδίας ἕκαστος).

Divine division of *timai*: every (major) god his city—that is the briefest summary of current theories concerning city-gods or patron gods. The image of gods as city patrons, however, is mythical/theoretical rather than evidential.[265] An Athenocentric bias in our sources may obfuscate the fact that often the patron divinity escapes identification, that some cities do not seem to have had a patron god(dess) at all, or that elsewhere several gods may have claimed that position.[266]

---

[263] Cf. *ibid.* 230b; 238c; 241e; 263d. G.J. de Vries, *A Commentary on the Phaedrus of Plato* (Amsterdam 1969) *ad loc.* "Pan is here mentioned in the first place as representing the ἐντόπιοι θεοί." On the whole scene: A. Motte, Le pré sacré de Pan et des Nymphes dans le Phèdre de Platon, *AC* 32 (1963) 460–476. Pan (side by side with the Nymphs) appears emphatically as a local 'Pan here' in Menander's *Dyskolos*. In v. 413 Sikon, reacting to a mention of Pan, asks τουτονὶ λέγεις; whereupon Getas answers: τοῦτον. In 663 Knemon is called τῷδε γείτων τῷ θεῷ. On Pan and the Nymphs as a collective of local gods (often enjoying personal devotion) see: Ch.M. Edwards, *Greek Votive Reliefs to Pan and the Nymphs* (New York 1985); Van Straten 1976, 279. Cf. also: A. Klöckner, 'Menschlicher Gott und göttlicher Mensch? Zu einigen Weihreliefs für Asklepios und die Nymphen', in: R. von den Hoff & St. Schmidt (edd.), *Konstruktionen von Wirklichkeit. Bilder im Griechenland des 5. und 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.* (Stuttgart 2001) 121–136. See also below p. 126.

[264] The formula is ὑμεῖς δέ, ἐφυδριάδες Νύμφαι, ἀιδώνιαι, ἔγχωροι κατοικοῦσαι, as brilliantly reconstructed by D. Jordan, *Eulimene* 1 (2000) 130 f., from heavily corrupted curse texts of late antiquity. For invocations to local gods, cf. in a letter on papyrus (*P.Tebt* 413,3, 2nd–3d c. AD): "Every day I pray for your health to the gods here" (τοῖς ἐνθάδε θεοῖς); *P.Oxy* 935: "Pausanias to his father Julius Alexander. Before all else I pray for your health and I make devotion on your behalf before the gods of the region…"

[265] That is, as far as the classical period is concerned. In later times, especially in Asia Minor, we see cities claiming that they are both under protection and in the power of one great god. See above n. 239 and Chaniotis 2010, 134 with n. 91, for a range of epithets stressing the presence of a divinity in a village, city or region.

[266] See: Brackertz 1976; S. Cole, Civic Cult and Civic Identity, in: M.H. Hansen (ed.), *Sources for the Ancient Greek City-State. Acts of the Copenhagen Polis centre* 2 (1995) 292–325. W. Burkert, Greek *Poleis* and Civic Cults: Some Further Thoughts, in: M.H. Hansen & K. Raaflaub (edd.), *Studies in the Ancient Greek Polis* (Historia Einzelschr.

More instructive are explicitly documented human initiatives. Ael. *VH* 12, 61, relates that in 379 BC the citizens of Thurii decided by vote in their assembly that the Windgod Boreas—who had destroyed the fleet of the enemy—would be a citizen of the city and they allotted him a house and a piece of land, founded an annual festival for him, and called him *euergetes* (benefactor).[267] The Athenians, for their part, decided to adopt this god as a κηδεστής, "a relative/son in law."[268] Comparably, one of the two Dionysoi in the city of Heraea in Arcadia was called *polites*.[269] Gods as honorary citizens[270] and owners of land and house, that is the ultimate expression of local inclusion in the world of 'ours'—a "naturalization" in the words of Detienne. Likewise, the inhabitants of Thebes call on the θεοὶ πολῖται for help (Aesch. *Sept.* 253).[271] The preponderance of the notion of *sumpoliteia* between god(s) and men may appear from the fact that the Stoa, in a later period, exploited it to explain the creation of the kosmos, namely as inspired by divine desire "that the kosmos would be a *sumpoliteia* for gods

95 [Stuttgart 1995]) 201–210, refines Cole's views, doubts the ubiquity of gods as city patrons, and warns against an all too dominant picture of the *polis* as a constitutive element of religion (as presented *i.a.* by Sourvinou-Inwood 2000a and b).

[267] A. Jacquemin, ΒΟΡΕΑΣ Ο ΘΟΥΡΙΟΣ, *BCH* 103 (1979) 189–193, presents a very good discussion of the purpose and meaning of this, underlining that πολίτην εἶναι is the standard expression in secular decrees on granting citizen rights to a non-Athenian. Cf. Detienne 1986, 52, and in: Detienne & Sissa 1989, 159; 202 f. Lucian. *De sacr.* 10 relates that nations honour the gods and make them their citizens (πολίτας).

[268] Hdt. 7.189.1. See: W.J. Agard, Boreas at Athens, *CJ* 61 (1965) 241–246; Garland 1992, 71; Parker 1996, 156 f.; Mikalson 2003, 61. Generally on Boreas: S. Kaempf-Dimitriadou, Boreas, in: *LIMC* III.1 (1986) 133–142.

[269] Paus. 8.26.2, τὸν μὲν καλοῦσιν αὐτῶν Ιολίτην, τὸν δὲ Αὐξίτην. Here, however, caution is called for. *Polites* does not necessarily mean that Dionysos was seen as a co-citizen. Contrary to *Auxites*, he might be 'the god of the city' (= belonging to the city), just as epithets such as Polias, Polieus, Polissouchos, do not necessarily make Athena or Zeus a city patron. See on this especially Burkert *o.c.* (above n. 266) 208.

[270] In a rather different sense, citizenship of the gods is a characteristic trait of Roman religion, according to J. North, Conservatism and Change in Roman Religion, *PBSR* 44 (1976) 6 and 11; J. Scheid, Numa et Iupiter ou les dieux citoyens de Rome, *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 59 (1985) 41–53; *idem, Religion et piété à Rome* (Paris 1985) 51–55.

[271] Parker 1997, 150, "formally perhaps 'gods of the city' but surely also by suggestion 'citizen gods.'" In favour of the latter, at least as a connotation, I would propose two arguments: 1) in v. 251 the choros implores the *sunteleia* not to forsake them. This *sunteleia* is the community of the ones (the gods) who have a common task (*telos*) as *phylakes* of the city, 2) there is a clear—and in my view intended—contrast in v. 253 between *politai* (the gods) and the fear to become slaves (*douleias*).

and men" (τὸν κόσμον…συνπολειτευόμενον θεοῖς καὶ ἀνθρώποις).[272] This was one of the preferred targets of Epicureans as appears from Diogenes of Oinoanda, who scorned the Stoics for the assumption that gods would need a city and human beings as co-citizens.[273] In the same period and region in which Diogenes wrote this (mid 2nd c. AD), Greek cities would endow gods with city magistracies and make them eponyms.[274] In the form of their images they also frequently headed processions and official delegations (προπρεσβεύειν).[275]

With these observations we are confronted with perhaps the most elementary strategy towards ordering, which we encountered for the first time in the inscription of Kolophon, "the gods and heroes who dwell in our city (*polis*) and land (*chora*)." It is a strategy that, moreover, is understood and deployed by both locals and outsiders. In Eur. *Phoen.* 588 ff. there is a discussion between Eteokles, ready to defend his city against his brother Polyneikes, who after a year of exile in Mycene is now at the point of attacking his former home town. When Polyneikes invokes the gods of Thebes as witnesses and for support, Eteokles denies him that right: "Invoke the gods at Mykenai, not here" (Μυκήναις, μὴ 'νθάδ' ἀνακάλει θεούς).[276] When Polyneikes finally decides to launch the attack on his native city, he bids farewell to

> Lord Apollo Aguieus and the palace and the friends of my youth and the statues of the gods rich in sacrifices (καὶ σὺ Φοῖβ' ἄναξ Ἀγυιεῦ καὶ μέλαθρα χαίρετε, ἥλικές θ' οὐμοὶ θεῶν τε δεξίμηλ' ἀγάλματα, 631/2).[277]

---

[272] Philodem. *Piet* 14 = *SVF* II 192.23–4. Comparably, albeit with different implications, Christians might call their own religion their πολιτείαν τοῦ θεοῦ (Clem. *Ep.* 1.54.4) and themselves συμπολῖται τῶν ἁγίων καὶ οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ (Eph. 2.19).

[273] Fr. 20 I–II = NF 39.I and II. M.F. Smith, *Diogenes of Oinoanda. The Epicurean Inscription* (Naples 1993) 180 ff.; *idem, The Philosophical Inscription of Diogenes of Oinoanda* (*TAM* Ergänzungsband 20, Vienna 1996) 79 ff. Commentaries in; *idem*, More New Fragments of Diogenes of Oinoanda NF 39–40, in: J. Bollack & A. Laks (edd.), *Études sur l'Épicurisme antique* (Lille 1976) 279–318, espec. 290, and Excavations at Oinoanda: The New Epicurean Texts, *AS* 48 (1998) 125–170, espec. 137.

[274] L. Robert, *Hellenica* 2 (1946) 51–64; *OMS* 7 (1990) 378 with n. 328; R.K. Sherk, The Eponymous Officials of Greek Cities V, *ZPE* 96 (1993) 267–295, espec. 283 ff. All this of course not without some financial incentives.

[275] M.K. Nollé & J. Nollé, Vom feinen Spiel städtischer Diplomatie. Zu Zeremoniel und Sinn kaiserzeitlicher Homonoia-Feste, *ZPE* 102 (1994) 241–261, espec. 253 with n. 40 (I owe this reference to Peter Herz).

[276] 608, cf. 613. J.U. Powell, *The Phoenissae of Euripides* (London 1911) *ad* 608: "this implies: your home and your gods, to whom you can appeal, are at Argos, not here."

[277] Note that Apollo Aguieus, the statues of the gods, the palace and the friends all belong to the same category of familiar and beloved ones. Despite the predicate I cannot believe that ἀγάλματα is here 'altars' as Mastronarde hesitantly considers. Apart

Later in the same play (1364–1376) Polyneikes indeed invokes the (Argive) goddess 'Lady Hera' arguing: "I am now yours (σὸς γάρ εἰμι), because I married Adrastos' daughter and dwell in his land." Eteokles invokes Pallas Athena, patroness of Thebes, in her local temple.[278] In Aesch. *Sept.* 14 Eteokles exhorts his fellow citizens to guard their city and guard the altars of her local gods (καὶ θεῶν ἐγχωρίων βωμοῖσι).[279] Later, at 271 ff., he himself invokes

> the city-guardian gods of our country, both the ones who control the fields and those who watch over the market place (ἐγὼ δὲ χώρας τοῖς πολισσούχοις θεοῖς, πεδιονόμοις τε κἀγορᾶς ἐπισκόποις), and Dirke's spring and Ismenos' stream.[280]

Aesch. *Ag.* 88 ff. describes these *theoi enchorioi*[281] as "all the gods that guide the city, gods on high and gods below the earth, gods of the doors and of the market-place" (πάντων δὲ θεῶν τῶν ἀστυνόμων, ὑπάτων χθονίων, τῶν τε θυραίων τῶν τ' ἀγοραίων), where ἀστυνόμων refers to the gods οὓς ἡ πόλις νομίζει (as in the charge against Socrates), θυραίων to gods of the kind of Apollo Aguieus, and ἀγοραίων to the gods of the public space. The Phoibos Aguieus, invoked by Polyneikes, is the very same type of 'personal' Apollo that is addressed as 'dearest

---

from the current meaning of ἀγάλματα the scene derives its tragic flavour from the presence of the gods in statuesque form, just as Apollo Aguieus is present. However, particularly in the case of Aguieus the difference between statue and altar is often difficult to draw. Cf. above n. 202.

[278] On this scene see: Mikalson 1989, 81.

[279] On this scene and the differences between Eteokles' attitude and that of the choros of women see: A.L. Brown, Eteocles and the Chorus in the Seven against Thebes, *Phoenix* 31 (1977) 300–318; E. Stehle, Prayer and Curse in Aeschylos' *Seven Against Thebes, CPh* 100 (2005) 101–122; M. Giordano-Zecharya, Ritual Appropriateness in *Seven against Thebes*. Civic Religion in the Time of War, *Mnemosyne* 59 (2006) 53–74.

[280] The division of gods and heroes over land and city is ubiquitous in similar texts, especially in oaths or promissory enunciations. E.g. in a treaty between Hierapytna and Rhodos (*I.Cret* III iii 3 A pp. 31–36; Bengtson, *Staatsverträge* 551.3): Τῶι Ἁλίωι καὶ τᾶι Ῥόδωι καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις θεοῖς πᾶσι καὶ πάσαις καὶ τοῖς ἀρχαγέταις καὶ τοῖς ἥρωσι ὅσοι ἔχοντι τὰν πόλιν καὶ τὰν χώραν τὰν Ῥωδίων (on the old designation *archagetas* see: J.H. Kroll, *Hesperia Suppl.* 20 [1982] 65–76). Cf. *Syll*[3] 360, 3 (Chersonesos): "Zeus, Earth, Helios, Parthenos, θεοὺς Ὀλυμπίους καὶ Ὀλυμπίας καὶ ἥρωας ὅσοι πόλιν καὶ χώραν καὶ τείχη ἔχοντι. Also: Lycurg. *Leoc.* 1, "I pray to Athena and the other gods and heroes established in the city and country…" (εὔχομαι γὰρ τῇ Ἀθηνᾷ καὶ τοῖς ἀλλοῖς θεοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἥρωσι κατὰ τὴν πόλιν καὶ τὴν χώραν ἱδρυμένοις) with Parker 1996, 25 f. on its chauvinistic tenor and context and *ibid.* 147 n. 15 for evidence on gods 'of the territory', 'city-holding' 'before the door' in Aeschylos.

[281] Soph. *Ant.*199 calls these local gods θεοὺς τοὺς ἐγγενεῖς.

Apollo' in Menander's *Samia* 444: χαῖρ', Ἄπολλον φίλτατε.[282] Incidentally, this is a first testimony of how closely local loyalties between men and gods are connected with and dependent on the visible presence of the national, local or even personal deities.

Polyneikes, in the passage cited, acts in accordance with inter-communal and inter-statal religious codes. Generals on the point of declaring war or launching an attack against an enemy city legitimize their action and secure the support of the local gods by swearing that they themselves are not guilty of initiating acts of aggression. In Thuc. 4.87.2, the Spartan general Brasidas threatens the Akanthians, if they do not take his side:

> then I shall call upon the gods and heroes of your country (θεοὺς καὶ ἥρως τοὺς ἐγχωρίους) to witness that I came to help you and could not make you understand it. I shall lay waste to your land.....

Very similar is the situation when the Spartan king Archidamos urges the Plataeans to come over to the Spartan side. In their reaction (Thuc. 2.71.4), the Plataeans first remind him of earlier oaths of mutual non-aggression (during the Persian war made between all the allies including Sparta and Plataeae), and they appeal to

> the gods who witnessed that earlier oath and to the gods of your fathers, and to the gods of our country (καὶ τοὺς ὑμετέρους πατρῴους καὶ ἡμετέρους ἐγχωρίους).

---

[282] A.W. Gomme & F.H. Sandbach, *Menander. A Commentary* (Oxford 1973) refer to Ar. *Vesp.* 875 as parallel: ὦ δέσποτ' ἄναξ, γεῖτον Ἀγυιεῦ τοὐμοῦ προθύρου προπύλαιε. Fraenkel *Aesch. Agamemnon* 1081 quotes von Wilamowitz "the customary μὰ τὸν Ἀπόλλω τουτονί in Menander," where note again the deictic notion. These are some instances out of many in dramatic art where a god, present in the form of his image, is invoked to heighten the dramatic emotion. Ample evidence in Mastronarde *ad Phoen.* 631, who supposes that a statue of Apollo Aguieus is present on the stage. "The god was the last object of which a wanderer took farewell at his departure, the first which he greeted on his return," thus Pritchett 1990, 168, with extensive evidence on Apollo Aguieus (see above n. 202). On greetings to the local gods, including Aguieus, at arrival from abroad: Aesch. *Ag.* 810: πρῶτον μὲν Ἄργος καὶ θεοὺς ἐγχωρίους δίκη προσειπεῖν, and 503 ff., where the messenger greets his home-land and the Greek gods and (519) the palace and the δαίμονες ἀντήλιοι (the eastwards directed divine statues in front of the entrance of the palace), with Fraenkel *ad loc.* On the greeting χαῖρε see below n. 374.

When, subsequently, the Plataeans persist in their allegiance to the Athenians, the Spartan king calls to witness the gods and heroes of the land (θεῶν καὶ ἡρώων τῶν ἐγχωρίων 2.74):[283]

> Gods who dwell in (lit: have) the land Plataea and heroes (θεοὶ ὅσοι γῆν τὴν Πλαταιίδα ἔχετε καὶ ἥρωες) bear witness with me that from the beginning it was in no spirit of aggression, but only because these people had first broken their engagements with us, that we invaded this land. (….) Grant us your consent (συγγνώμονες ἔστε) that the punishment for what has been done wrong may fall on those who were the first to do evil and that we may be successful in our aim which is a just revenge (τῆς δὲ τιμωρίας τυγχάνειν).

Thus, the gods invoked possess both a universal (functioning as 'moral governors of all mankind') and a local (in their role of defenders of their own city) aspect.[284] In sum, "Your gods may in some sense be

---

[283] They must have been largely the same as the famous series mentioned by Plut. *Arist.* 11.3 that we discussed above p. 47. Is the differentiation between Plataean *theoi enchorioi* and Spartan *theoi patroioi* conditioned by the fact that the oath had been sworn in Plataean territory?

[284] The two passages from Thucydides just cited reveal that the expression "who dwell in our country" is not reserved to heroes, but may just as well apply to gods, as they no doubt do in other texts adduced above. Obviously heroes are, by their nature, a privileged category to be endowed with the predicate *enchorios* (Pausanias for instance attributes the predicate *epichorios* to heroes but never to Greek gods: Pirenne-Delforge 1998, 133 f.; 2008, 244 f. He is also the only author who frequently—though not consistently- uses the word *enagizein* for the [holocaust] sacrifice for a certain category of heroes as opposed to *thuein* for the gods: G. Ekroth, Pausanias and the Sacrificial Rituals of Greek Hero-cults, in: Hägg 1999, 145–158, Pirenne-Delforge 2008, 185 f. and cf. more generally: K. Stratiki, Le culte des héros grecs chez Pausanias [*BAGB* 2002], 70–93). After all, they are—at least in principle—typically bound to their local place, whether grave or heroon, generally marked by an enclosure. They often have only one sanctuary and are confined to one city. They also more typically serve as focuses of identity and defenders of groups and cities. See: Kearns 1989 Ch. III (city), and Chs. IV and IV (smaller groups); *eadem,* Between Gods and Man: Status and Function of Heroes and their Sanctuaries, in: Schachter 1992, 65–107, espec. 73–77; U. Kron, Patriotic Heroes, in: Hägg 1999, 61–83, who discusses two types of saving heroes. Of course heroes may migrate to other cities as well: J.W. Hall, Beyond the "polis": the Multilocality of Heroes, in: Hägg 1999, 123–143; A. Blomart, Transferring the Cults of Heroes in Ancient Greece, in: Aiken & Maclean 2004. But see the critical approach of D. Boehringer, *Heroenkulte in Griechenland von der geometrischen bis zur klassischen Zeit. Attika, Argolis, Messenien* (Berlin 2001) espec. 13–159. Their proximity is essential (Kearns *ibid.* 83), entailing characterisations such as ἐπιχώριος δαίμων (Paus. 6.20.2 for Sosipolis at Elis), or ἥρως γείτων (below p. 136). Cf. Rusten 1983, 288–297. Despite all this, it is remarkable that the testimonia just cited, as well as many others mentioned earlier, show that heroes have to share their predicate *enchorios* with the gods, who, by possessing a sanctuary in land or city are likewise regarded as 'endemic', i.e. 'established in our country or city', as for instance in the expression ἡμετέρα θεός for Athena (Ar. *Nub.* 601, and more in Parker 2005, 396,

the same as mine; they may even have the same name as mine; but they are still local (ἐγχώριος) to your city."[285] Corollary to this is that, as Aesch. *Sept.* 218 voices a common notion, "the gods depart when a city is taken" (θεοὺς τοὺς τῆς ἁλούσης πόλεος ἐκλείπειν λόγος), a recurrent expression[286] that represents a deep-rooted popular conviction, perhaps most impressively worded in the famous line of Virgil *Aen.* 2.351: *excessere omnes, adytis arisque relictis, di quibus imperium hoc steterat.*[287]

As so often, it is satirists who precisely put their finger on the spot by playing with this remarkable ambiguity between pan-Hellenic and local facets of homonymous gods. When, in the comedy named after her, Lysistrata addresses Spartans and Athenians as Greeks, she appeals to their common cults of pan-Hellenic gods in Olympia, Thermopylai, Delphi, at the time that the allied Greeks resisted the Persian attack (1129–1134).[288] However, when later in the same play Athenians and Spartans finally make a treaty and call the gods as witnesses to their oaths, each of the parties, besides using their own dialects,[289] invoke their own gods. These gods, even when they bear the same names, are

---

n. 35) and, much later, ἐπιχώριος θεός for the divinised Antinoos in an inscription from Mantineia (*IG* V.2, 281).

[285] Rowe 1976, 43, in one of the most thoughtful—though largely ignored—studies on the implications and the problems of polytheism.

[286] Cf. the commentary of Groeneboom *ad loc.*; Hdt 8.41; Soph. Fr. 452; Eur. *Tro.* 26 f.; Chr. Pelling, *Plutarch: Life of Antony* (Cambridge 1988) on Plut. *Ant.* 75.4; R. Parker, Gods Cruel and Kind, in: Pelling 1997, 154; Scheer 2000, 219–222; West 1997, 487: "This desertion of a city by a god is an absolutely commonplace motif in Sumerian and Akkadian literature." In his prayer in Aesch. *Sept.* 76 f. Eteokles reminds the gods that it is also in their interest to protect the city against the enemy with the expression "Methinks it is our common cause I urge" (ξυνὰ δ' ἐλπίζω λέγειν). Conversely, Greeks could justify the plundering of an alien sanctuary by interpreting it as a sign that a community had been abandoned by the gods. See: Chaniotis 2005, 157 with the evidence. Chr. Habicht, Versaümter Götterdienst, *Historia* 55 (2006) 153–166, has collected testimonies concerning the interruption of cult and festivals due to precarious circumstances of war or lack of finances, as well as the fear of the population's fear of the (divine) consequences.

[287] There are more Roman testimonies (see Pelling *l.c.* preceding note), where a connection with the typically Roman ritual of the *evocatio* cannot be excluded.

[288] J. Henderson, *Aristophanes. Lysistrata* (Oxford 1987) *ad loc.* "panhellenic sentiment could be invoked when politically expedient and usually includes mention of common festivals……", with extensive evidence in actual rhetorical texts.

[289] Auffarth 1994b, 2. "Wenn in der *Lysistrate* am Ende die Athener und die Spartaner je von ihren lokalen Göttern schwärmen, je in ihren deutlich unterschiedenen Dialekten, tut das der neu beschworenen Gemeinsamkeit keinen Abbruch." On the Laconian dialect here: St. Colvin, *Dialect in Aristophanes and the Politics of Language in Ancient Greek Literature* (Oxford 1999), index s.v. Laconian.

clearly differentiated by their different epithets or qualifications (1280–1315).[290] The Athenians first invite the Charites to open the dance, and then invoke Artemis, her twin brother Ièios ('the healer' = Apollo), the Nysian (Dionysos), Zeus and his spouse (Hera), and next the gods who will be the witnesses[291] of this peace which goddess Aphrodite has fashioned. The Spartans in turn invoke only and purely Spartan deities.[292] First they invite the Lakonian Musa to lead the hymns to the god of Amyklai (Apollo), Athena of the Brazen House, the valiant Tyndarides, while the *choroi* are directed by the daughter of Leda (Helena).[293]

Sameness and difference, self and other. What emerges is a picture of overlapping and sometimes clashing systems of organisation. The local pantheon of each single *polis* is a model of a small divine kosmos. However, it appears to be flanked on two sides by two extreme alternatives. On the one hand there is the all-embracing national pantheon defined by a common Hellenic heritage, providing ample opportunity for conflict between local and national. On the other hand there are various types of personal religiosity. Let us first have a quick glance at the former one.

2. *Beyond the* polis *border (and back)*

"The gods of the Greeks"

All nations have their own religious cultures, as Hdt. 8.144. was the first to state in a celebrated passage where the Athenians give their reasons for never even considering defection from the common Greek cause. Here they mention the four central characteristics constituting *to Hellenikon:*

---

[290] Furley & Bremer 2001, I, 346–349; II, 336–340.

[291] Cf. below p. 118 on this type of oath-gods.

[292] How very Spartan (including joking allusions) is well demonstrated by C.A. Anderson, *Athena's Epithets. Their Structural Significance in Plays of Aristophanes* (Stuttgart-Leipzig 1995), 52 f.

[293] The differentiation is not restricted to comedy. Paus. 4.27.6. on the new foundation of Messene after the battle of Leuctra, relates that the Thebans sacrificed to Dionysos and Apollo Ismenios, the Argeans to Hera of Argos and Zeus of Nemea, the Messenians to Zeus of Ithome and the Dioskouroi. See: Detienne & Sissa 1989, 203 f. I am less sure whether at Paus. 4.27.5 Epaminondas' instruction to the *manteis* to inquire εἰ βουλήσεται ταύτῃ καὶ τὰ τῶν θεῶν ἐπιχωρῆσαι means "si les dieux veulent habiter là" (however much it would suit my argument).

> the common blood (descent), the common language, the temples and religious rituals, and the whole way of life we understand and share together (τὸ Ἑλληνικόν, ἐὸν ὅμαιμόν τε καὶ ὁμόγλωσσον, καὶ θεῶν ἱδρύματά τε κοινὰ καὶ θυσίαι ἤθεά τε ὁμότροπα).

These happen to be exactly the four great characteristics that, as our anthropological textbooks teach us, are still regarded as the basic materials of a culture's identity. This definition of *to hellenikon* stands alone among our ancient sources, and hence suggests a personal view of Herodotus himself, rather than an opinion of an average Greek.[294] His special focus on the religious element in the shared elements of Greekness is also manifest in his emphasis on the Athenians' "first and most weighty" reasons for not defecting, namely "the images and habitations of the gods (πρῶτα μὲν καὶ μέγιστα τῶν θεῶν τὰ ἀγάλματα καὶ τὰ οἰκήματα), that have been burnt down and which we are obliged to avenge."[295] Greekness is *inter alia* and not in the last place determined by sharing gods and cults.[296] However, as Irene Polinskaya in an important paper convincingly argues,[297] we should beware of equating the Greek terms *homoios* and *koinos* in the passage cited.[298] Accordingly, she demonstrates that "having common shrines and sacrifices" here (like elsewhere) does not refer to typological similarity between

---

[294] As argued by J. Hall, *Hellenicity. Between Ethnicity and Culture* (Chicago – London 2002), 190 f. On this celebrated Herodotean passage see especially: K. Zacharia, Herodotus' Four Markers of Greek Identity, in, *eadem* (ed.), *Hellenism. Culture, Identity, and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity* (Cornwall 2008) 21–36.

[295] On the Persian violations of temples and images see: Scheer 2000, 201–229; P. Funke, *o.c.* (below n. 323).

[296] Besides Hdt. 8. 144 see: Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.20; Isokr. 4.43–6. Cf. Henderson *l.c.* above n. 288. Gods and cult are the minimum definitions of the *polis* according to Plut. *Mor.* 1125E: "Travellers may find cities which have no walls, no kings, no houses of stone, no writing, no coined money, no theatre or gymnasium, but a city without cult places and gods (ἀνιέρου δὲ πόλεως καὶ ἀθέου) no traveller has ever seen."

[297] Polinskaya 2010.

[298] "There is, however, a conceptual and in fact a mathematical difference between things that are 'same' and things that are 'common.' 'Same' implies an equation between the elements of comparison, while 'common' connotes an intersection, an overlap." She here follows a few predecessors with the same vision: A. Schachter, Greek Deities: Local and Pan-hellenic Identities, in: P. Flensted-Jensen (ed.), *Further Greek Studies in the Ancient Greek Polis* (Stuttgart 2000), 9–17, espec. 10: "The fact that we are Hellenes, that is, we have the *same* blood and the *same* language, we *share* sanctuaries and festivals of gods, we have the *same* way of looking at life." Sourvinou-Inwood, 2000a, 300: "The Greeks saw themselves as part of one religious group; the fact that they had *common* sanctuaries and sacrifices—as well as the *same* language and the *same* blood, a perceived common ancestry, and the *same* way of life—was one of the defining characteristics of Greekness."

Greek religious practices, as in "we, Greeks, have sanctuaries for the gods and conduct sacrifices." Rather it indicates a concrete, exclusive usage, limited to a specific group involved in sharing and to specific conditions under which this sharing is possible. More precisely, the shared sanctuaries and festivals that Herodotus had in mind were probably specific places and events, as for instance the great panhellenic sanctuaries and the festivals celebrated there."[299]

As early as the fifth century BC we find several dedications from Naukratis "to the gods of the Greeks" (τοῖς θεοῖς τῶν Ἑλλήνων), written on the wall of a building that according to the editor must have been "devoted to the worship of several individual gods and the 'gods of the Greeks' as a whole."[300] This building must have been the Hellenion which Hdt. 2.178 describes as the central temple of Naukratis constructed by the concerted action of a large number of Greek cities. It obviously served as an icon of Greek cohabitation and as an ethnic tool for anchoring their common self-identity safely in the sand of the Egyptian environment.

Recent research, however, has demonstrated that things are too complicated to warrant such a global qualification without further discussion. Polinskaya 2010 summarizes the problems. First, only in two of the 27 graffiti taken as referring to the "gods of the Greeks," are the words for gods and Hellenes possibly coupled together, and in two more cases, the coupling might be suggested by the preserved article *tois* coupled with the beginning of the word Hellenes. Each of these four graffiti individually could be restored differently than "the gods of the Greeks." Secondly, the Hellenion was shared by nine Greek communities, listed by Herodotus 2.178, but not by all the Greeks in

---

[299] As suggested by Henderson *o.c.* (above n. 288) and A. Schachter *o.c.* (above n. 298), 2. See also: P. Funke, Herodotus and the Major Sanctuaries of the Greek World, in: V. Karageorghis & I. Taifacos (edd.), *Herodotus and the Major Sanctuaries of the Greek World* (Nicosia 2004) 159–167.

[300] D.G. Hogarth & C.C. Edgar, Naukratis 1903, *JHS* 25 (1905) 105–136, espec. 116 ff.; Jacobi 1930, 5 no. 1. More recently, with more detail and precision: H. Bowden, The Greek Settlement and Sanctuaries at Naukratis: Herodotus and Archaeology, in: M.H. Hansen & K. Raaflaub (edd.), *More Studies in the Ancient Greek Polis* (Historia Einzelschr. 108, Stuttgart 1996), 17–37, espec. 31–36; A. Möller, *Naukratis. Trade in Archaic Greece* (Oxford 2000), 94–112; U. Höckmann, & A. Möller, The Hellenion at Naukratis: Questions and Observations, in: A. Villing & U. Schlotzhauer (edd.), *Naukratis: Greek Diversity in Egypt. Studies on East Greek Pottery and Exchange in the Eastern Mediterranean* (London 2006), 11–22. Aphrodite Pandemos at Naukratis has been interpreted in the same 'Pan-hellenic' vein, but see: A. Scholtz, Aphrodite Pandemos at Naukratis, *GRBS* 43 (2002/3) 231–242.

Naukratis. There were a number of separate Greek sanctuaries founded by other Greek communities, including those of Aegina, Samos, and Milete, as Herodotus tells us, which have indeed been recovered. So, *if* the Hellenion was the temenos of "the gods of the Greeks," these gods were not the gods of all the Greeks, but only of those who did not boast an individual temenos of themselves.

More generally it appears that the expression "Gods of the Greeks" never enjoyed great popularity in Greece itself. If Greeks refer to the totality of their own gods, they rather use the expression πάντες θεοί, to which we shall return in Appendix I of this book. In epigraphical texts expressions such as "Gods of the Greeks" are extremely rare: in literature they occur practically without exception in (mostly rhetorical) contrastive or patriotic contexts. Whenever the expression θεοὶ (οἱ) Ἑλλήνιοι *vel sim.* occurs in Herodotus, this is always in explicit opposition to foreign, especially hostile, cultures, and/or with a focus on the unity of Hellenic culture.[301] Moreover, if Greeks wish to emphasize their common identity in terms of religion they seem to prefer references to common cults, festivals or sacred places, as in Hdt. 8.144 just quoted. "(Inter)national religion" in the sense of common Greek religion, especially when used as an argument, is cultic rather than theological.[302]

Divine globalisation: an excursion abroad

Contrarily, references to gods (and cults and rituals) of other nationalities abound and their numbers kept pace with the expansion of—and

[301] In the words of How and Wells *ad* Hdt. 2.178: "in impassionate appeals to Greek sentiment." Cf. Hdt. 5.92.η; 5.49.3; also 8.144 (5.99.7 β: Zeus Hellenios, and 4.108 are not about *the* Greek gods, but about Greek gods). Moreover, all these expressions occur only in speeches, "dies heisst in der naiven Perspektive des jeweiligen Akteurs" (Burkert 1990, 24 f.). Cf. Harrison 2000, 215, and J. Henderson's remark above n. 288. For this reason, *pace* Sourvinou-Inwood, Hdt. 5.92.η, (where two opposing parties each invoke the same gods of the Greeks) cannot serve as a testimony "that the gods who were worshipped in the different *poleis* were, of course, perceived to be the same gods" (see above n. 145 and Appendix II). Not only for its high grade of rhetoric, but, more importantly, because it is the *common* Greek gods who are invoked here and *not* "the gods of the different Greek *poleis*." Note that the secular notion of "panhellenism", too, developed under the influence of contacts (and conflicts) with foreign cultures, especially Persia. See: L.G. Mitchell, *Panhellenism and the Barbarian in Archaic and Classical Greece* (Swansea 2007) Ch. III.

[302] As is clear from Parker 2005, 79–88, whose relevant chapter with the title 'International Religion', deals with *theoriai*, groups visiting sanctuaries of other cities, membership of Amphictyonies, and Pan-hellenic festivals.

the intensification of contacts with—rising empires, first of all the Persian. Xen. *Inst. Cyr.* 3.3.21 f. makes Cyrus sacrifice "first to Zeus Basileus, next also to the other gods (τοῖς ἄλλοις θεοῖς)… And together he also called in the heroes who inhabit the land of the Medes (ἥρωας γῆς Μηδίας οἰκήτορας)."[303] As a result of political and cultural globalisation, inscriptions—especially curse texts—from Asia Minor, already in the classical, but increasingly in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, display references to "the gods of the Greeks and the Persians;"[304] "the gods of the Pisidians"[305] and "the gods of the Romans."[306] While here the "gods of the Greeks" are no doubt equivalent to what the Greeks themselves used to refer to as their πάντες θεοί,[307] the gods of the Persians and Pisidians sometimes evidently refer to pairs or groups of local gods. Already in the late classical and early Hellenistic periods we have side by side with the Lydian Mother and the Lydian Zeus, whom we already met, also dedications to 'Artemis the Persian'[308] and 'Artemis the Ephesian'. A fourth/third c. BC inscription from Asia Minor has "Artemis the Medan and the Ephesian and all the gods" (ἡ Ἄρτεμις ἡ Μήδεια καὶ ἡ Ἐφεσία καὶ οἱ θεοὶ ἅπαντες).[309]

---

[303] Clearly, the expression is viewed through a Greek looking glass, but therefore even better illustrates the Greek notion that all cultures have their own national gods.

[304] Once, as θυοὶ (= θεοὶ) Ἑλλήνων καὶ Ιερσῶν, "une grande nouvauté:" L. Robert, *CRAI* 1978, 279–286, espec. 283 (= *OMS* 5, 735–742, espec. 739) with commentary; Strubbe 1997, no. 127, with further literature on the nature of these Persians.

[305] θεῶν Ιισιδικῶν κεχολωμένων τύχοιτον, H. Malay, *ZPE* 48 (1982) 255 with lit.; Strubbe 1997, no. 129, adding more examples, all from Karia: 131–133, 135, 137–139.

[306] ἐχέτω τοὺς δήμου Ρωμαίων θε[οὺς κεχολ]ωμένους πάντας καὶ πάσας: J. Keil & A. von Premerstein, Bericht II. Reise, *Denkschr. Ak. Wien* 54 (1911) 99, no. 196; *TAM* V.1 no. 423; Strubbe 1997, no. 50. Cf. Μὴν Ἰταλικός in: E.N. Lane, *CMRDM* I (Leiden 1971) no. 93 (= *MAMA* V. p.71 no. 150). Lane: "the god's title is surprising. The known geographical titles of Men are not derived from outside Asia Minor." For a collection of these geographical titles see: *CMRDM* V (1976) 70–75, where Lane at p.72, argues that it is "used to underscore the supposed Anatolian-Italian kinship." On various kinds of Menes, including Μῆνες Καταχθόνιοι see: E.N. Lane, Men: A Neglected Cult of Asia Minor, *ANRW* II 18.3, 2161–2174.

[307] So Strubbe 1997, 95. For πάντες θεοί, see Appendix I.

[308] M. Brosius, in: M. Brosius & A. Kuhrt (edd.), *Studies in Persian History. Studies in memory of David M. Lewis* (Leiden 1998) 227, argues that the cult of the Persian goddess Anahita, practiced above all by the Persian aristocracy, remained separate from the cult of Artemis in Lydia. The cult of Ἄρτεμις Ιερσική does not imply a Hellenization of Anahita but rather a Persianization of the cult of Artemis.

[309] Of course S.M. Sherwin-White, *ZPE* 49 (1982) 30, is right in rejecting the interpretation that this is Artemis qualified with the personal name of the famous sorceress Medeia, as proposed by A.N. Oikonomides, *ZPE* 45 (1982) 116, but hardly in her own suggestion that we have here *one* goddess with two different epithets: "The goddess

An interesting text may refer to the same two Artemides as the ones here mentioned. It also provides a unique testimony of what may have been a clash between their respective worshippers. It is an inscription from Ephesos (ca. 340–320 BC) which proclaims the death sentence on people from Sardes who had committed a sacrilege against Artemis Ephesia. When the Ephesians sent a *theoria* to Sardis to bring the sacred clothes to the local Artemision founded by the Ephesians, the condemned persons had assaulted the *theoroi* and violated the *hiera*.[310] Most specialists argue that these Sardians were followers of their own local Artemis—be it the originally Greek Artemis of Sardes or the Persian Anahita = Artemis Anaeitis—and defended her own goddess against Ephesian[311] oppressive competition.

It is in the Hellenistic period that Greek cities, especially those in Asia Minor, hand in hand with the decrease of their autonomy,

---

who is invoked is Persian and Ephesian Artemis." Cf. S.E. Porter, *Artemis Medeia Inscription Again*, in *ZPE* 93 (1992), 219 ff. And see next note.

[310] L. Robert, Sur des inscriptions d'Éphèse, *RPh* 41 (1967) 36–40; *I.Ephesos* 2; *SEG* 36.1011. See for the various contrary interpretations: O. Masson, L'inscription d'Éphèse relative aux condamnés à mort de Sardes (*I.Ephesos* 2), *REG* 100 (1987) 225–239; H. Wankel, Zu den Chitonen für die ephesische Artemis, *EA* 9 (1987) 79 f. (not bringing the clothes towards but taking them from the sanctuary at Sardes); O. Hansen, The Sacrilege Inscription, *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 1 (1987) 1–8. A less violent—but no less clear—testimony of the competition between the two cities five centuries later concerning the honour of the imperial neocorate can be found in *SEG* 37 (1987) 886 = *NDIEC* 9 (2002) 27 ff.

[311] Artemis was the famous tutelary and patron deity of Ephesos, who enjoyed worldwide veneration. "Everywhere (παντα̣χοῦ) both in Greek and barbaric countries people established sanctuaries and temples and altars for her," as another Ephesian inscription (*I.Ephesos* 24) boasts. Text, translation and commentary in: *NDIEC* 4 (1987) no. 4, pp. 74–82, with a list of sites where devotees (and often shrines) of Artemis were located. For another survey of 'branch cults' of Artemis Ephesia in other cities see: Ch. Picard, *Éphèse et Claros: Recherches sur les sanctuaires et les cultes de l'Ionie du nord* (Paris 1922) xvi–xxii. On Artemis' central position cf. Oster 1976, 41 ff.; *idem*, Ephesus as a Religious Center under the Principate, *ANRW* II.18.3, 1661–1728, espec. 1699–1726 on Artemis. Cf. also the defence of the Ephesian silversmith against the Christian threat by his praise of Artemis "whom all Asia and even the whole inhabited world worship" (Acts 19.27); Paus. 4.31.8: "All cities worship Artemis Ephesia and individuals hold her in honour above all the gods." Somewhere in the first half of the 2nd c. AD, the Ephesian goddess was declared in a public document to be, in direct comparison with the other Olympians, "forever the greatest among all the gods" (*SEG* 43.756). H. Koester (ed.), *Ephesos. Metropolis of Asia. An Interdisciplinary Approach to its Archaeology, Religion, and Culture* (Cambridge Mass. 2004) offers various relevant studies. Cf. C. Berns, 'Konkurrierende Zentren. Überlegungen zur religiösen Repräsentation in Ephesos und den Städten der Provinz Asia in der Kaiserzeit', in: H. Cancik *et alii* (edd.), *Zentralität und Religion* (Tübingen 2006) 273–308; Chaniotis 2010, 114 f.

displayed the first signs of chauvinistic pretensions not unlike the nationalistic aspirations of the kings whose subjects they now were. And their competitiveness was analogous.[312] The inscriptions that we just discussed as well as a few that we saw earlier belong to the earliest testimonies of this new ideology, which proliferated over the centuries and reached its acme in the Roman period. It is also in the period of Roman imperialistic expansion that the religious horizon expands. The treaty of Hannibal and Philippos of 216 BC[313] provides an early illustration. The oath is *inter alia* sworn

> by all the gods that inhabit/possess Carthage and all the gods that inhabit/possess Macedonia and the rest of Greece (ἐναντίον πάντων θεῶν ὅσοι κατέχουσι Καρχεδόνα, ἐναντίον πάντων θεῶν ὅσοι Μακεδονίαν καὶ τὴν ἄλλην Ἑλλάδα κατέχουσι).

Globalisation of the Mediterranean world fostered migration of Greek (and other) gods, sometimes with curiously confusing effects. An inscription from Thera in Karia (Asia Minor) has a dedication to "Asklepios, the one who is *at* Epidauros" (Ἀντίμαχος Ἀσκληπιῷ τῷ ἐν Ἐπιδαύρῳ εὐχήν),[314] who is apparently another god than for instance the famous Asklepios at Pergamon. A much later Latin inscription from Carthage, however, reads "to the Aesculapius *from* Epidauros" (*Aesculapio ab Epidauro*, *AE* 1968 no. 553). The first presumably was dedicated by a pilgrim who was cured by the god in his Epidaurian sanctuary, the other in a *local* Carthaginean sanctuary of the Epidaurian god, as there were many such satellite sanctuaries.[315] Are they the same gods: one remaining at Epidauros to whom you must go in person in order to communicate with him and pray for recovery, the other having migrated to your own town and hence easier to approach? The Epidaurian cult centre is notorious for its expansion through foundations of annexes elsewhere by means of the transfer of a symbol of his

---

[312] I have analysed the paradox of freedom in subjection of the Hellenistic cities in Versnel 1990 Ch. I. For the rise of competition see above n. 176.

[313] Polyb.7.9, with Walbank *ad loc.* and Barré 1983, 93 ff.

[314] *BE* 1976, 643; A. Bresson, P. Brun & E. Varinlioglu, Les inscriptions grecques et latines, in: P. Debord & E. Varinlioglu (edd.), *Les Hautes Terres de Carie* (Bordeaux 2001) no. 53.

[315] Also of other gods, e.g. Saturnus Achaiae (M. Leglay, *Saturne Africain*, Mon. I, p. 123, 1). More complicated are dedications, found at the Esquiline at Rome, to Asclepius Zimidrenus (or: Sindrinus) by citizens of the Thracian city of Philippopolis in Thrace who formed part of the praetorian cohorts. Here Asclepius, though located in Rome, is identified with a Thracian god Sindrinus (*ILS* 2094 f.).

representation, a snake or a statue—an *aphidruma*.[316] A famous story tells about his arrival at Rome in the form of a huge snake in the early third century BC.[317]

The Hittites in such cases prayed to the god or goddess of a city asking him or her to literally "divide him/herself in two," after which, accompanied by an intricate ritual, the old deity remains in the old temple and the new one is physically moved and/or coaxed into the new lodging, thus generating two separate cult centres where first there was only one.[318] In this case the god in the new sanctuary is an unmistakable clone of the original one. Less obviously so in the case of the many Epidaurian Asklepioi. And what about another very self-replicating deity in North Africa known as *inter alia*: Ceres Marusia (*I.L.Alg.* I 2033), Ceres Africana (Tertul. *Ad uxor.* 1; *De exhortat.*

---

[316] Edelstein 1998, II pp. 232–257; Riethmüller I, 2005, 85–90 on the "mindestens 409 gesicherten und 77 ungesicherten Kultorte im nichtgriechischen Bereich." For two exhaustive surveys of the Greek mainland sanctuaries see: Riethmüller II, 2005, 9–315 (to be read with the review by G.H. Renberg, *BMCR* 2009.12.40), and M. Melfi, *I Santuari di Asclepio in Grecia* 1 (Rome, 2007), the first of two planned volumes. On *aphidruma* see: I. Malkin, What is an Aphidruma? *Cl.Ant.* 10 (1991) 77–97; most recently: A. Anguissola, Note on APHIDRUMA 1: Statues and their Function, 2: Strabo and the Transfer of Cults, *CQ* 56 (2006) 641–646.

[317] Edelstein I, nos. 848–852. On cult transfer in general E. Schmidt, *Kultübertragungen* (Giessen 1909) is still a good introduction.

[318] R.H. Beal, Dividing a God, in: Mirecki & Meyer 2002, 197–208. G. Wilhelm, 'Gleichsetzungstheologie', 'Synkretismus' und 'Gottesspaltungen' im Polytheismus Anatoliens, in: Krebernik & van Oorschot 2002, 53–70, espec. 67 ff. discusses a text edited by Kronasser, *KUB* XXIX 4 (*ÖAW* 241/3, Vienna 1963) 24 f. First the goddess in her old temple is asked 'to divide' her divinity; next, in her new temple, she is invoked to come from a huge number of lands and places ("so umfassend aufgelistet, daß dabei geradezu eine Geographie herauskommt") where she is supposed to sojourn every now and then. Recently J.L. Miller, Setting up the Goddess of the Night Separately, in: B.J. Collins, M.R. Bachvarova & I.C. Rutherford (edd.), *Anatolian Interfaces: Hittites, Greeks and their Neighbours. Proceedings of an International Conference on Cross-cultural Interaction, Sept. 17–19, 2004* (Atlanta 2008) 68–72, discusses questions such as "were these two hypostases essentially the same deity, worshipped at two different places, or two distinct personalities"? He adduces a unique passage from a text known as 'the Expansion (or Adlocation) of the goddess of the night': "Honoured deity! *Preserve your being*, but *divide your divinity*! Come to that new temple, *too*, and take yourself the honoured place! And when you make your way, then take yourself *only* that place." From the italicized passages he deduces that the deity was conceived of as "a single entity, a distinct personality, which, however, could divide herself into two parts that would each retain the qualities of the original singularity" (67). These are two striking illustrations of the alternating imagery concerning the dwellings of a god, as discussed above pp. 89–94.

cast. 13), Ceres Graeca (*CIL* VIII 10564); Ceres Graia (*CIL* VI 1780)?[319] And what to think of the Cereres Punicarum?[320]

Once again, the question prompts itself: were all internationals such as Asklepioi or Cereres "of course, perceived to be the same gods"? Or would the (some, many) ancient believers rather react as the nun in a monastery of miracle-working Haghia Eirene (Irini) that I visited, who, on learning that I also hoped to visit another monastery of the same Saint, riposted: "No need to go there: *our* Irini is better." I am not sure whether in the eyes of the locals the Ceres Africana was better than the Ceres Graeca to the same degree as the Artemis of Ephesos in the view of the Ephesian citizens was better than the Persian one, but at any rate she was "our goddess." Ancient Greeks might react in different ways, any Greek might react differently according to his momentary context.

The present section has taught us that the religious culture of the Greek people is marked by a multitude of horizons. A local one, a national one and an international one. After our quick excursion into the world outside Greece we return to the first two divine worlds, being the ones that dominated the archaic, classical and partly also the Hellenistic periods. Greeks, as Greeks, speak the same language and worship the same gods, as Athenians and Spartans they speak different (Greek) languages and have different gods, even when addressed with the same (Greek) names. What happens when the two worlds meet?

When local meets national/regional/local

The following example beautifully illustrates what can happen when two levels of discourse come to clash. Earlier we came across the question asked to establish Athenian citizenship: "Where is your Apollo Patroos and your Zeus Herkeios?" The two gods are the symbols of one's place of belonging. In Pl. *Euthd.* 302b, Dionysodoros from Chios asks: "Tell me Socrates do you have a Zeus Patroos?" (ἔστιν σοι Ζεὺς Πατρῷος)? When Socrates has to confess that he cannot boast such

[319] See: G. Barbieri, *Kokalos* 7 (1961) 33.

[320] *Idem, Kokalos* 8 (1962) 210. On the African Cereres: J. Carcopino, Le culte de Cereres et les Numides, in: *Aspects mystiques de la Rome païenne* (Paris 1943) 13–47 (very speculative); P. Xella, Sull' introduzione del culto di Demetra e Core a Cartagine, *SMSR* 40 (1969) 215–228; A. Cadotte, *La Romanisation des Dieux. L'interpretatio romana en Afrique du Nord sous le Haut-Empire* (Leiden 2007) 343–360, with the full epigraphic evidence at pp. 348–353, and 705. It appears that the African Cereres designated both Kore/Ceres and Tellus/Demeter.

a god, his opponent immediately infers that Socrates does not have *theoi patrooi* (θεοὶ πατρῷοι) nor rites or sacrifices (ἱερά) nor anything else decent, hence is not a real Athenian. Then Socrates explains that, like all other Athenians, he does have his own cults both *oikeia* (house cults) and *patroa* (ancestral cults), but that a Zeus with the eponymic epithet *Patroos* is alien to Ionians, including Athenians.[321] "We have an *Apollo* Patroos. In Athens Zeus is not called *patroos* but *herkeios* and *phratrios*, just as [we have an] Athena phratria." Finally, the conclusion of his opponent: "So you do have gods such as Apollo, and Zeus and Athena?" is confirmed by Socrates.

I could not imagine a better example of playing[322] with gods who reveal their exclusive and culturally determined identities through specific epithets, yet in the end are summarily acknowledged as the great Olympians. At the same time it is an outstanding example of the confusion and the ambiguities that may surface when equality and difference, self and other, are selected as a subject of discussion and hence consciously confronted by the Greeks themselves. These ambiguities between local, regional and national religions persistently interfere in an alarming alternation, also in cultic practice. Due to common Greekness Greeks as a rule shun destroying or robbing sanctuaries of other *poleis* even if they are in war. Xen. *Hell.* 3.2.22, reports that at Olympia there was an oracular shrine of Zeus, where "an ancient and established principle obtained that Greeks should not consult the oracle with regard to a war waged against Greeks." In Thuc. 4.97.2–3, the Boeotians explicitly appealed to a pan-Hellenic norm (νόμιμα) when they accused the Athenians of violating a temple.[323] On the other hand,

---

[321] That this is not entirely true (*RE* XVIII 9 [1949] 2259 ff; Van Leeuwen *ad Ar. Nub.* 1468 f.), perhaps as a corollary of Apollo's overwhelming position as Patroos in Athens, is neither relevant for the passage nor for our issue. See on Apollo Patroos above n. 236. On this passage of Plato and its implications for the meaning of Apollo Patroos and Zeus Herkeios see: Brulé 2005a.

[322] Epithets are 'good to play with': C.A. Anderson, *o.c.* above n. 292. The word 'play' is even more appropriate when one is aware of the polysemantic nature or the term *patroos* (Parker 2005, 22 f.).

[323] On this passage see: W.K. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War* V (Berkeley 1991) 162; S. Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides* II (Oxford 1996) 309 f. See also: F. Walbank *ad* Polyb 4.62 and 5.11. The violation of sanctuaries is often worded in terms of οὐ μόνον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς θεοῖς πολεμεῖν (Polyb. 4.62.3; 32.15.13; Isoc. *Paneg.* 156). For robbery of temple treasures (frequent in the Hellenistic period) and some indignant reactions see: Parker 1983, 170–175; T. Linders, Gods, Gifts, Society, in: Linders 1987, 117 f.; Chaniotis 2005, 154–157; K. Trampedach. Hierosylia: Gewalt in Heiligtümern, in: G. Fischer & S. Moraw (edd.), *Die andere Seite der Klassik. Gewalt*

there are local cults that explicitly deny access to Greeks beyond the own *polis* borders.[324]

Frictions cannot always be avoided. Although resident gods are expected to defend their city against human invaders, outside the domain of literary texts it will be hard to find the idea of a god believed to have defended his/her own Greek city against *the (patron) god(s)* of another Greek city.[325] Such a conception is typical of epic, most obviously of the Homeric scenes of divine battles. And it may occur in satirical genres. Babrios 15 (= 50 Halm) does play with the idea:

---

im 5. und 4. Jahrhundert vor Chr. (Stuttgart 2005) 143–165. The material on 'general Hellenic laws' has been collected by P. Ducrey, *Le traitement des prisonniers de guerre dans la Grèce antique des origines à la conquête romaine* (Paris 1999) 289–295. J. de Romilly, *La loi dans la pensé grècque* (Paris 1971) 40–45, shows that most references to 'Hellenic law' actually are appeals to general moral principles which distinguish Greeks from barbarians. Cf. J. Wilkins, *Euripides: Heraclidae* (Oxford 1991) on vv. 963 ff. and 1010 ff. It was these νόμιμα that enabled Herodotus to introduce vindictive *hierosylia* as the major incentive of the Persian aggression, as argued by P. Funke, Die Perser und die griechischen Heiligtümer in der Perserkriegszeit, in: B. Bleckmann (ed.), *Herodot und die Epoche der Perserkriege* (Köln etc. 2007) 21–34.

[324] Cf. the well-known stories about Kleomenes' unsuccessful attempts to enter the Athenian Akropolis (Hdt. 5.72.3) and to bring a sacrifice at the altar of the Heraion at Argos (Hdt. 6. 81–82). On the first see: R.C.T. Parker, *Cleomenes on the Acropolis: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered before the University of Oxford on 12 May 1997* (Oxford 1998). The wording of this ban spoken by the priestess of Athena οὐ γὰρ θεμιτὸν Δωριεῦσι παριέναι ἐνταῦθα, resembles that of an (enigmatic) 'lex sacra' from Paros (*LSCG* no. 110, 5th c. BC) Χσένοι Δοριῆι ωὐ θέμις.....Cf. *NGSL* pp. 18–21. The fact that this type of prohibitions needed to be made explicit in *leges sacrae* implies that it is not a hard and fast rule. Sokolowkski *ad loc.* "Les étrangers (…) étaient exclus de *certains* cultes public et privés (my italics)." Reserve about the universality of this norm also in Th. Wächter, *Reinheitsvorschriften im griechischen Kult* (RVV 9.1 [1910]) 118–123, who gives the evidence. Also, most recently: P. Funke, Fremde und Nicht-Bürger in den griechischen Heiligtümern der antiken Meerwelt, in: A. Naso (ed.), *Stranieri e non cittadini nei santuari greci. Atti del convegno internazionale* (Firenze 2006) 1–10. Occasionally we get the information that a *xenos* could take part in cult only with the help of a citizen, normally the *proxenos* of his city, who acted as an intermediary. See: M.-F. Baslez, *L'Étranger dans la Grèce antique* (Paris 1984) 39 f.; 111–125; Sourvinou-Inwood 1990 = 2000a, 14. P.A. Butz, Prohibitory Inscriptions, *xenoi*, and the Influence of the Early Greek *Polis,* in: Hägg 1995, 75–95, provides an extensive discussion of the only four extant inscriptions concerning prohibition of foreigners (including the one just quoted) and of the case of Kleomenes. On the correspondences between the exclusion of local women and that of male foreigners from rites and places see: S.G. Cole, *Gunaiki ou Themis*: Gender Differences in the Greek *Leges Sacrae, Helios* 19 (1992) 104–122.

[325] This is quite a different thing than the often expressed conviction or hope that the justness of one's case makes 'the gods' into one's partisans. On this general use of 'the gods' and its implications see: Chs. II and III. Different, too, are attempts to win the gods of an enemy city over for your own (just) case. Above pp. 99 f.

> Two men, an Athenian and a Theban, are quarrelling about whether the heros Theseus or the heros Herakles is the greater. The advocate of Theseus, a clever speaker, wins the discussion, and the other exclaims: "Enough. You won. May therefore Theseus be angry at my people and Herakles at the Athenians."

We also find it in Eur. *Heracl.* 347–352, where Iolaos boasts that his party (Athens) has better divine allies (συμμάχους) than the Argeans, for "they have Hera as sovereign, but we have Athena and it is our luck that we have better gods" (θεῶν ἀμεινόνων τυχεῖν). However, such human boasts (or hopes) to have the better god as compared to the one of the enemy are exceptional. For that matter, in the two examples quoted, they are disqualified by their immediate contexts. One famous instance of one god being invoked to protect his/her city against the power of (an)other god(s) is of a different nature: Solon 4.1–4 (W.):

> Our city shall never fall by the doom of Zeus nor by the contriving of the blessed gods. Pallas Athena, great of heart, our overseer (*episkopos*), born of the thunder-father, holds up her hands to guard us.

This is a peculiar case, for two reasons: the particular nature of the *notion* Zeus[326] and the particularly close relationship between the *god* Zeus and his daughter Athena.[327] Generally, however, the 'divine law'

---

[326] Zeus is often just another word for the arbitrary and impartial force that allots good and bad luck (see Chs. II and III). This explains why he himself in the archaic period is hardly ever a city-god (above n. 266). Brackertz 1976, 93 f., argues that Zeus is a god "von dem man sich kaum ein persönliches Eingreifen für eine bestimmte Stadt vorstellen konnte," since it was the ideal "einen *persönlichen* Schutzpatron zu haben."

[327] As so often, also here the borderline between religious belief and poetical metaphor is hard to draw. Parker 1996, 69, accords it the prize of "expressing for the first time in our records (though scarcely in history) a fundamental tenet of civic piety at Athens." Cf. Parker 1997, 150 f., on Athena as protectress of Athens and other protective 'city holding' gods. Garland 1992, 29: "The poem intimates that Athena exercised her guardianship over Athens (…) by intercession with her father, in much the same way as the Blessed Virgin Mary intercedes with the Son." He also refers to Hdt. 7.141.3–4, the oracle of Delphi against the Athenians at the invasion by Xerxes: "Pallas Athena cannot propitiate Olympian Zeus, even though she prays with many utterances and profound wisdom." On these texts, and adding Aristophanes' pun on Solon's image (*Equ.* 1168 ff.) see: C.J. Herington, Athena in Athenian Literature and Cult, in: C. Hooker (ed.), *Parthenos and Parthenon* (G&R suppl. 10, 1963) 61–73. On the special type of relationship of Athena with her father Zeus: J. Neils, Athena, Alter Ego of Zeus, in: Deacy & Villing 2001, 219–32, espec. 222, discussing the present text and a drinking song in which Athena and her father *together* defend the city (Ath. 15. 694c; Page, *PMG* nos. 884 ff.): "It is precisely this pairing that guarantees the well-being and prosperity of Athens."

expressed by Artemis in Eur. *Hipp.* 1329 f. seems to prevail: "The gods are bound by this law (νόμος): nobody will obstruct another's plan, but we keep aloof."[328]

Two domains of 'ours', one sometimes embracing, at other times excluding the other. One national pantheon, many regional and many more local pantheons. And lots of questions. For instance, and most pressing though generally disregarded, the question of identity that we discussed. It appears that Greek gods suffer from multiperspectiveness. Simultaneously functioning in different spheres of belonging they (or many of them) participate both in the pan-hellenic Olympian divine family on the mythical Mount Olympos and in various local—and locally widely divergent—pantheons. The relationship between these different horizons may be of the nature of inclusion, or of complementarity or of contest.[329] 'Commuting' from one domain to the other, as for instance from national myth to local cult, entails dissolution of former contexts and relations, and sometimes radical adaptations to new identities. The bewildering result is that we are confronted with a Zeus Heraios—'Zeus belonging to Hera'—mentioned in an inscription from Mytilene,[330] while from other places we know a Zeus Aphrodisios (Paros)[331] and a Zeus Damatrios (Rhodos).[332] That one god is allotted a place in the temple of another as a companion—a *parhedros*—is common practice, but a Zeus *of* Hera, *of* Demeter, *of* Aphrodite is a dif-

---

[328] Mind, though, that this law seems to have been invented for the occasion. Barrett *ad loc.* is unable to give parallels. Donald Mastronarde, however, refers me to what he wrote in: *Blackwell Companion to Greek Tragedy*, "Gods", note 1: "While this claim is conditioned by the needs of the plot, it should not be dismissed as a one-time ad hoc feature. Compare Hera's awaiting the moment when she can act against Heracles (Eur. *Heracles* 828–32; note too Zeus' inaction when Hera does act) and Athena's explanation of why she had not helped Odysseus return earlier (Homer, *Odyssey* 13.341–3)."

[329] Thus B. Gladigow in *GGA* 235 (1983) 6.

[330] A.J. Heisserer & R. Hodot, The Mytilenean Decree of Concord, *ZPE* 63 (1986) 109–128, espec. 112 unconvincingly suggest "an allusion to the majesty of Zeus as the Master of Olympus." Another Zeus Heraios in Athens: *IG* I^2 840.21 = I^3 234. 21. Cf. *LSCG* no. 1 p. 2. "Il s' agit probablement d'un culte pratiqué dans les sanctuaires de ces divinités." Cf. Schwabl, *RE* Suppl. XV, 1068, who connects it with Hieros Gamos ritual. On the specific nature of Hera of Samos see: Ph. Brize, Offrandes de l'époque géométrique et archaïque à l'Héraion de Samos, in: de La Genière 1997, 123–140. On the relationship of Hera and Zeus in local myths and cults see: M. Jost, Le thème des disputes entre Héra et Zeus en Arcadie et en Béotie, *ibid.* 87–92.

[331] *IG* XII 5, 220.

[332] *I. Lindos* 183, a dedication to the *Damateres* (as also in no. 671), "un pluriel qui comprend évidemment Δαμάτηρ καὶ Κόρα," according to Blinkenberg *ad loc.,* referring to Nilsson, *ARW* 32 (1935) 87. Hence the other addressee mentioned in the votive text, Ζεὺς Δαμάτριος, would refer to the Eleusinian Ζεὺς Εὐβουλεύς.

ferent thing.[333] That the highest god should be more or less subsidiary to—or at least restricted in scope by—these goddesses by adding their names as epithets is a striking illustration of how (national) mythical relations can be thwarted by local hierarchies.[334] Nor is this all: in contrast to the Mytilenian Zeus, most explicitly identified as the Zeus connected with Hera, we find a Hera at Argos who has definitely nothing to do with Zeus. The city of Argos finds its identity "in der umfassenden Lokalgöttin Hera, nicht der Gattin des Zeus."[335]

---

[333] A curious analogon can be found in a Christian oracle question (*PSI* XVII Congr. 21 = M. Manfredi, *Trenta testi greci da papiri letterari e documentari* [Firenze 1983]) 70: ὁ θ(εὸς) τῆ[ς θ]εοδόκος Μαρία (read: θεοτόκου Μαρίας) δίδοι… "May the god of Maria, mother of god, give…" For parallels see commentary *a.l.* Again different are the two or three twined divine names that are characteristic of Italic religion of the type (Latin) Lua Saturni, Ianus Quirini, (Umbr.) Tursa Serfia Serfer Martier. The construction and meaning of the different parts have never been fully explained: K. Latte, Über eine Eigentümlichkeit der italischen Gottesvorstellung, *ARW* 24 (1926) 244 ff. = *Kleine Schriften* (Munich 1968) 76 ff.; L. Deubner, Altrömische Religion, *Antike* 2 (1926) 61 ff; F. Altheim, Altitalische Götternamen, *SMSR* 8 (1932) 146–165, espec. 162 ff.; K. Kerényi, Altitalische Götterverbindungen, *SMSR* 9 (1933) 17–28; F. Altheim, Altitalische und altrömische Gottesvorstellung, *Klio* 30 (1937) 34–53; espec. 38 ff.; G. Radke, *Die Götter Altitaliens* (Münster 1965) 24–36. As appears from this bibliography it was a hot topic in the first half of the 20th century but has practically disappeared from current scholarly discussion. How untransparent the matter is may be apparent from Kerényi's interpretation of the Umbrian divine combination quoted above: "O 'schreckende Gottheit' in der Lage, in der du dich im Wirkungskreis des 'Unterweltgöttes' offenbarst, jenes Gottes in der Lage, in der er in der Sphäre des 'Kriegsgottes' sich zeigt." Moreover, U. Scholz, *Studien zum altitalischen und altrömischen Marskult und Marsmythos* (Heidelberg 1970) 63, n. 44, was right when he wrote: "Die Frage nach dem Wesen des Polytheismus überhaupt blieb dabei leider unbeachtet." But see now: J. Scheid, Hierarchy and Structure in Roman Polytheism: Roman Methods of Conceiving Action, in: C. Ando (ed.), *Roman Religion* (Edinburgh 2003) 164–189.

[334] One can also compare Athena Areia, on which see below nn. 340 f.

[335] Auffarth 1994b, 25. *Ibid.* 105: "Hera ist nicht als Gattin eine Göttin von Zeus' Gnaden, keine Ressortgöttin. Sie ist die souveräne Lokalgöttin." M.-Fr. Billot, Recherches archéologiques récentes à l'Héraion d'Argos, in: J. de La Genière 1997, 11–82, on the basis of votive objects shows the unique nature of the Hera of Argos. N. Aloni-Ronen, Marrying Hera: Incomplete Integration in the Making of the Pantheon, in: Pirenne-Delforge 1998, 11–22, espec. 14: "Hera was primarily perceived in the Argive plain not as Zeus' wife, but as a patroness of the heroes and a goddess of warriors," with more literature in n. 15. All this despite the fact that Hera at Argos, too, was associated with marriage and the nuptial bed: A. Kauffmann-Samaras, Le lit dans l'Héraion d'Argos, *Ktema* 15 (1990) 185–194. More generally J.D. Baumbach, *The Significance of Votive Offerings in Selected Hera Sanctuaries in the Peloponnese, Ionia and Western Greece* (Oxford 2004), has managed to delienate different specific functions of each Hera, even though in all six sanctuaries offerings also disclose a universal association of Hera with agriculture and vegetation.

Back to the polis

If then polytheism is a multidimensional network of cults and religions, ever varying according to context, place and individual interest, what can we say about the question from which we took our departure, namely that of order versus chaos? Is the local pantheon of a village or city an orderly composition? Not in the sense of a structuralist kosmos as it may be sought (and sometimes found) in a panhellenic mythical pantheon. But perhaps it still satisfies in its own particular way the definition given by Sourvinou-Inwood 1990 = 2000a, 19:

> Greek religion is, above all, a way of articulating the world, of structuring chaos and making it intelligible; it is a model articulating a cosmic order guaranteed by a divine order which also (in complex ways) grounds human order, perceived to be incarnated above all in the properly ordered and pious *polis*, and providing certain rules and prescriptions of behaviour, especially towards the divine through cult.

The gods who are *enchorioi* to a city or village together constitute another pantheon, that is another kosmos—a mikrokosmos if you wish—, complying with a different law of organization. This *kosmos* is not construed as a grammar of symbolic meanings, as proposed by Vernant for the panhellenic divine world. The local *kosmos* is composed in accordance with principles of sacred place and sacred time. Local gods are right *here* in their sacred topography, and they are right *now*, as registered in the familiar chronological order of the local festive calendars. *Their* order is that of a map drawn to delineate a coherent landscape with centres of divine power to resort to and divine residents to appeal to, havens to anchor one's identity. And, in this way—perhaps only in this way—they together form a (locally) coherent universe. Two examples provide a wonderful illustration of this.

Arist. *AP* 42.3 tells us that in Athens, as the initial part of their *rite de passage* towards adulthood and citizenship, the *epheboi* were led on a long circuit of the sanctuaries of the city (πρῶτον μὲν τὰ ἱερὰ περιῆλθον). "The purpose of this tour of the temples was presumably to instil in the ephebi a sense of devotion to the cults of Athens," writes Rhodes *ad loc*. No doubt, but at the same time the tour served to ritualize their inclusion into the city as a sacred universe.[336] Citi-

[336] On the ephebic rituals, especially in view of their training as fighters, see Chaniotis 2005, 44–56. An interesting insight into the possible political aspects of such rituals is offered by an inscription of 122 BC (*IG* II² 1006, ll. 65–71) describing an excursion

zenship *inter alia* meant κοινονία τῶν ἱερῶν just as, contrarily, exclusion from the ἱερά was the signal par excellence of *atimia*.[337] It has been surmised that the *epheboi* during their tour brought sacrifices at every altar connected with these temples,[338] which would well tally with the extended programs of festivals and ritual obligations in which they participated during the period of their initiation. We find them spelled out in a number of later inscriptions[339] and they all end up with the phrase: "and they performed together the other sacrifices that are due to the gods." It was during this first tour, too, that at the temple of Aglauros they took the—very archaic—ephebic oath,[340] in which Aglauros was the first god invoked as witness of the oath, followed by Hestia, Enua, Enualios, Ares and Athena Areia, Zeus, Thallo, Auxo, Hegemone, Herakles,[341] the borderstones of the fatherland, the wheat, barley, vines, olive-trees, fig-trees. Especially the participation of

---

of ephebes "to the border of Attika carrying their weapons, acquiring knowledge of the territory and the roads. . . . and they visited the sanctuaries in the countryside offering sacrifices on behalf of the people." See: Chaniotis 2005, 51 f. They also visited Amphiaraos, which did not belong to Athenian territory at the time (Sineux 2007, Ch. III), and sacrificed there.

[337] Andoc. 1.71 f.; 32 f.

[338] But we do not know which temples. Perhaps all of them, perhaps a selection. Pélékidis 1962, 111, lists various possibilities.

[339] Fom the 2nd century BC onwards as for instance *IG* II2 1006; 1008, 1028; 1029; 1036 etc. In the ephebic oath l.16 (see next note) they are summarized in the phrase καὶ τιμήσω ἱερὰ τὰ πάτρια. The earliest ephebic inscriptions of the fourth century BC (O.W. Reinmuth, *The Ephebic Inscriptions of the Fourth Century B.C.* [Leiden 1971]) are far less elaborate in every respect, including religious references. "In der Zeit, als die Ephebie noch eine wichtige Einrichtung des attischen Staates war, brauchte man nich mit vielen Worten zu sagen, was jeder wußte und empfand" (R. Merkelbach, Aglauros [Die Religion der Epheben], *ZPE* 9 [1972] 277–283, espec. 283). But Aristotle's testimony suffices as evidence for the ritual *circumambulatio*.

[340] As transmitted by Stob. 4.1.48 and Poll. 8. 105 f., and confirmed by the famous inscription from the sanctuary of Ares and Athena Areia in Acharnai: L. Robert, *Études épigraphiques et philologiques* (Paris 1938) 296–307; Tod² II (1948) no. 204; N.C. Conomis, On the Oath of the Athenian Ephebes, *Athena* 63 (1959) 119–131; Pélékidis 1962, 112 f., with discussion at 75–78; P. Siewert, The Ephebic Oath in Fifth Century Athens, *JHS* 97 (1977) 102–111; P. Brulé, *La fille d'Athènes* (Paris 1987) 33 f.; P.J. Rhodes & R. Osborne, *Greek Historical Inscriptions 404–323 BC* (Oxford 2003) no. 88. On oaths in general as "powerful public expression of collective approval and disapproval" and hence as testimonies of citizenship see: S.G. Cole, Oath Ritual and the Male Community at Athens, in: J. Ober & Ch. Hedrick (edd.), *Demokratia. A Conversation on Democracies, Ancient and Modern* (Princeton 1996) 227–248.

[341] I cannot go into this list of oath gods and their respective functions in the ephebic oath. See: M. Bock, *Österr. Jahreshefte* 33 (1941) 46–59, especially on Athena 49–55; Merkelbach, *o.c.* above n. 339; Conomis *o.c.* preceding note, and more generally Barré 1983.

boundaries and fruits of the land is an archaic trait that we encounter in different forms in other oath texts.[342] They once more show—as we have seen before—how gods and material components such as city, houses, graves, boundary stones and the fruits of the land *together* construct the lived identity of the local population.[343]

The second example is taken from Men. *Dys.* 260 ff., where the son of an old lady says:

> My mother was just about to make a sacrifice to some god. I have no idea which god it was, she does it every day. *She goes all around the district sacrificing* (ποιεῖ δὲ τοῦθ' ὁσημέραι· ἔρχεται[344] θύουσα τὸν δῆμον κύκλῳ ἅπαντ'…).

"Going all around the city sacrificing"[345] is a *very* satisfactory way of creating order, a *different* order, as the old women of Montegrano knew so much better than their young priest.[346]

---

[342] In their oath the Amphictyons (Aeschin. 3.109) promise to βοηθήσειν τῷ θεῷ καὶ τῇ γῇ τῇ ἱερᾷ. A treaty between Serdaoi and Sybaris (*Staatsverträge* II 120.5 ff.) invokes Zeus, Apollo and the other gods *and* the city of Poseidonia. An ephebic oath of Dreros (Crete, *Syll.*[3] 527.33–36; Chaniotis 2005, 46 f.) invokes as witnesses a long list of gods and "sources and rivers and all the gods and goddesses," which does not mean that sources and rivers are of the same divine status as the gods, but that they are just as much part and parcel of the civic identity of the oath takers. Generally on oaths in treaties of Cretan cities: Chaniotis 1996. Especially on the lists of gods in oaths: Brulé 2005b. See the discussion in Siewert 1972, who however is not sufficiently critical with regard to his testimonies. The "eternal fire" in an inscription of 117 BC (*Syll.*[3] 826C. 16) belongs to a different religious context.

[343] Cf. also above Aeschylos' prayer to gods who watch over the Dirce and Ismenos river. The oath between Hannibal and Philippos is sworn ἐναντίον ποταμῶν καὶ λιμνῶν καὶ ὑδάτων, which in my view should not be too rashly taken as a Semitic turn as Barré 1983, 90–93 consistently does.

[344] Note that the same verb is used here as in the description of the *epheboi.*

[345] Although one may guess that she belonged to that class of Greeks as typified by Chaniotis in n. 181 above, she does seem to have literally implemented Plato's advice (*Leg.* IV, 716 B) that the best thing for a good man is "to sacrifice to the gods, to be in continuous contact with the gods (προσομιλεῖν ἀεὶ τοῖς θεοῖς) through prayers, votive gifts and the total service paid to the gods." Whether "she will have satisfied her appetite as well as her piety" is an (unnecessary) guess that we must leave to the guesser: R. Osborne, Women and Sacrifice in Classical Greece, in: Buxton 2000, 310. Anyway, she may be expected to have had her part in the sacrificial meal later in the Dyskolos. On which see: A.K. Dalby, *Siren Feasts: A History of Food and Gastronomy in Greece* (London 1996) 2–5.

[346] In the Hellenistic and Roman periods this pious habit of (sometimes on a daily basis) frequenting the local temples increased greatly and resulted in the creation of a new verb ἱεροφοιτᾶν (Lat. *frequentare templa*). See: Veyne 1989, 182 with literature. Gregory Sifakis tells me that the periphery of many a Greek village is marked by a chain of protecting little sanctuaries called τὰ σημάδια τοὺ τόπου and that devout Christians are expected to go and pay reverence to a different saint every day. See

We see here representatives of extreme opposites of society—young men on the brink of full citizenship versus an old woman beyond her active female functions in the community[347]—performing the very same ritual of religious inclusion: the former as a one-day marked ritual, the latter as a daily—unmarked but no less ritual—routine. Only if we take these testimonies to heart can we understand the feelings of the rural Athenians when forced to evacuate the countryside at the start of the Peloponnesian war, as evoked by Thuc. 2.16:

> Deep was their trouble and discontent at abandoning their houses and the temples at which (right from the time of the ancient constitution) they and their families had always worshipped (οἰκίας τε καταλείποντες καὶ ἱερὰ ἃ διὰ παντὸς ἦν αὐτοῖς…πάτρια) and at having to change their habits and to bid farewell to what each regarded as his native city.[348]

It is this type of more personal devotion that leads us to our third section.

3. *Ducking out: gods in personal religiosity*

'My God': tokens of personal devotion

Around 400 BC a certain Archedamos, who had come from Thera to Attika, put up at the cave of Vari, where he led a secluded existence wholly devoted to the Nymphs.[349] Several inscriptions in the grotto commemorate his pious activities.[350] In one of them he is called a νυμφόληπτος ('seized by the nymphs'), "on whose instructions he

---

now on churches at the outskirts of villages (*exokklisia*) and icon stands (*eikonostasia*), their topography and function and their spatial and social interpretations, the fundamental study by Lucia Nixon, *Making a Landscape Sacred. Outlying Churches and Icon Stands in Sphakia, Southwestern Crete* (Oxford 2006).

[347] J.N. Bremmer, The Old women of Ancient Greece, in: Blok & Mason 1987, 191–215; R. Garland, *The Greek Way of Live: From Conception to Old Age* (Ithaca 1990). But see the pointed criticisms by L. Pratt, The Old Women of Ancient Greece and the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, *TAPhA* 130 (2000) 41–65.

[348] Translation by Crawley as adapted by Robert Parker.

[349] On this *nympholeptos* and his activities: Himmelmann-Wildschütz 1957; Van Straten 1976, 19 and nn. 264–268; Pleket 1981, 162 f.; Connor 1988. Most recent treatment: Purvis 2003, 33–63, Ch. 3: 'Archedemus of Thera'. The archaeologica and epigraphica of the Vari grotto have been re-published in: G. Schörner & H.R. Goette, *Die Pan-Grotte von Vari. With Epigraphical Commentary by Kl. Hallof* (Mainz 2004). The authors show that a cult for Pan and the Nymphs started in the early fifth c. BC thus predating Archedemos. After him, they suggest, it turned into an initiatory cult, complete with ritual baths and dances, and was attended by both men and women.

[350] *IG* I^3 977a–b, 980. See: Himmelmann-Wildschütz 1957, 8–12 and next notes.

decorated their grotto,"[351] and "laid a garden and made a dancing floor."[352] An early 5th-century inscription from a Nymph grotto at Pharsalos (Thessalia) records that a certain Pantalkes "has dedicated to the goddesses the tree (?) (and) the laurel" (Παντάλκης ἀνέθεκε τὸ δέ[νδρον] τὰν δὲ δάφ[ναν] ἃ[ι] ἐδ' ἀπ' ἀέ[θλον] Φάν[ι]π[ος).[353] Some generations later, in the 4th century in the same grotto an inscription was installed with a hexametric text[354] in which—I summarize the text—the author cordially welcomes

> the passers-by to this place sacred to the Nymphs and Pan and Hermes, ruler (*anax*) Apollo, Herakles and his comrades, the grotto of Chiron and of Asklepios and Hygieia. To them belong these most holy objects,

---

[351] *IG* I³ 980, Ἀρχέδημος ὁ Θηραῖος ὁ Νυμφόληπτος / φραδαῖσι Νυμφῶν τ'ἄντρον ἐξηργάξατο. This inscription is likely to have been written by a later admirer. The others are, witness their Doric dialect, most probably autographic.

[352] *IG* I³ 977a Ἀρχέδημος ὁ Θηραῖος κᾶπον Νύμφαις ἐφύτευσεν, adding in 977b καὶ χορὸν ὀρχεστὲς Νύνφαι ἐχσοικ[οδό]μεσεν. See, however, the critical discussion of this text and the various different readings of it in Purvis 2003, 44–50.

[353] I give the text as in Himmelmann-Wildschütz 1957, 28, where *SEG* 1.247 is rather more reticent with respect to conjecture. Most recent edition of this inscription and the one following: J.-Cl. Decourt, *Études épigraphiques 3. Inscriptions de Thessalie 1: Les cités de la vallée de l'Enipeus* (Athens 1995), 88–90, nos. 72 and 73. He reads: Παντάλκης ἀνέθεκε τόδ' ἔργον. Τὰν δὲ δάφ[ναν] ἄερ ἅπαξ ΕΦΑΝΙΙ. See discussions in Himmelmann-Wildschütz; Versnel 1981a, 79; Pleket *ibid.* 162. Full translation in Connor 1988, 162 f. Texts and discussion also in Purvis 2003, 17 f., with n. 23. We cannot be sure about the 'tree' and the 'daphne'. However, the emphasis on trees, plants and gardening is remarkable in these private cults, as also noticed by M.P.J. Dillon, The Ecology of the Greek Sanctuary, *ZPE* 118 (1997) 113–127, espec. 119 f. One might say that both these 'hermits' created their own 'sacred grove'. Sacred groves are marked as places of purity and bliss outside urban civilisation where the human meets the divine, as F. Graf argues in: Bois sacrés et oracles en Asie Mineure, in: O. de Cazaneuve & J. Scheid (edd.), *Les bois sacrés. Actes du Colloque international Centre J. Bérard* (Naples 1993) 23–29. On the phenomenon of the sacred grove in general: G. Rüpke, Kulte jenseits der Polisreligion: Polemiken und Perspektiven, *JAuC* 47 (2004) 5–15, espec. 9–12. On such groves in Greek regions with a collection of epigraphic testimonia see: G. Ragone, in: C. Albore Livadie & F. Ortolani (edd.), *La sistema uomo-ambiente tra passato e presente* (Bari 1998) 11–22; cf. J. Mylonopoulos, Natur als Heiligtum—Natur im Heiligtum, *ARG* 10 (2008) 51–83, espec. 60–65, with more literature. Full treatment: M. Horster, *Landbesitz griechischer Heiligtümer in archaischer und klassischer Zeit* (Berlin – New York 2004) 92–138. On utopian aspects of gardens see: A.L. Giesecke, *The Epic City. Urbanism, Utopia, and the Garden in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Washington DC. 2007). Angelos Chaniotis sent me a photo of a wooden table fixed at a eucalyptus tree somewhere in Crete with the text: ΤΑ ΔΕΔΡΑ 7 ΕΥΚΑΙΙ […], ΤΑ ΑΝΘΗ, ΤΗ ΒΡΥΣΗ ΚΑΙ ΤΟ ΕΡΓΟ ΠΡΟΣΤΑΣΙΑΣ, ΤΑ ΧΑΡΙΖΩ ΣΤΗΣ ΠΑΝΑΓΙΑΣ ΤΗ ΧΑΡΗ ("the seven eucalyptus trees, the flowers, the well, and the work of supervision, I give in gratitude to the Panaghia" [then follows the name of the giver]).

[354] *SEG* 1.248; cf. preceding note.

> o ruler Pan, in this place, the plants and the painted tablets and fine dedications and offerings in great quantities (ἔμφυτα καὶ πίνακες καὶ ἀγάλματα δῶρά τε πολλ[ά]). The Nymphs made the good man Pantalkes enter these places and made him the caretaker (ἐπίσσκοπον), he who planted all these and created this with his own hands.

The text next sums up all the blessings Pantalkes received from each of the gods mentioned and in the end invites everybody:

> to go up, sacrifice to Pan, pray and delight: for here is the end of all misery, good will come to you and strife will cease.

With these very personal testimonies we have arrived at the extreme other side of the religious 'encirclement' which the *polis* religion had to bear with, namely private and personal forms of religion, or rather devotion. To go by modern textbooks this topic is not particularly popular in current scholarship.[355] It shares this slight with those types

---

[355] M.P. Nilsson, *Greek Piety* (Oxford 1948) treats all sorts of themes such as justice, patriotic religion, astrology, monotheism and mystery religions, and spends exactly two pages on what he calls 'individualistic religion' with a few notes on Orphism, Eleusinian mysteries, Asklepios cult. But in his *GGR* I 248–52, private religious expressions receive a generous treatment, with the warning p.250 that they may be "bescheiden." (For some other similar initiatives in the middle of the last century see: Faraone 2008, n. 1.) Yet, in the same period, Festugière 1954, vii, already complained that "personal religion had been thrown into the shadows in the histories of Greek religion" since "there is a tendency in our times to emphasize the civic part of this religion because it is immediately manifest." Cf. A. Dihle, in: A. Bulloch *et alii* (edd.), *Images and Ideologies: Self-definition in the Hellenistic World* (Berkeley etc. 1993) 291: "There can be little doubt that minor deities such as heroes, Asclepius, the deities of the private homestead, had always been of greater importance for the individual in his everyday life than the powerful and imposing gods and goddesses of the city," with reference to Men. *Dys.* 260 ff., 430 ff. Recent minor textbooks generally follow the same track. Bruit-Schmitt 1992, 13 f. explain the absence of personal piety in their work by the extreme scarcity of the evidence. Mikalson 2005 has a chapter on 'Greek Religion and the Individual', but devotes it to impiety, death and afterlife, subjects which others (e.g. Price 1999) also deal with but not under the caption private, personal or individual religion. Jost 1992 is alone in devoting a special chapter to 'La dévotion personnelle' and indeed pays attention to the type of personal devotion that I discuss in the present section, including the choice for ecstatic or new and foreign forms of religion. Most recently, St. Instone, *Greek Personal Religion: A Reader* (Oxford 2009) returns to the strategy of earlier scholars and focuses almost exclusively on (high) literary texts, from Homer to Aristotle in his search for personal contacts of humans and gods (mostly in the form of epiphanies), and relatively great emphasis on Orphism. With three pages on a 'real life' personal contact between man and gods, viz. the curse tablets, he completes the book without one word on votive or domestic religion, as we shall discuss below. Recently Dasen & Piérart 2005, have done much to redress this imbalance in the scholarly interest. In her recent book *Les Grecs et leurs dieux. Pratiques et représentations dans la cité à l'époque classique* (Paris 2005) L. Bruit-Zaidman has a section on domestic religion (but cf. below n. 357). For

of private cults that are variably referred to as houshold, domestic, or family religion.[356] Although these house cults may, rather more easily than cults of *polis* or *deme*, lend themselves to personal forms of devotion, as does the veneration of the ikons in modern Greek houses, I leave them out of discussion. Domestic cults like those of Zeus Herkeios, Zeus Hikesios and others are basically of a communal nature, even if their execution may be dominated by one member of the family. Moreover, they are institutionalized and routinized cult forms and hence not (necessarily) marked by the trait that I consider essential for what I call private devotion: the element of personal choice based on an affective predilection.

Of course one has to admit that there are relatively few written sources providing explicit information on personal aspects of Greek devotional piety. In his Sather Lectures on personal religion among the Greeks, Festugière 1954 restricted the discussion of popular piety in classical Greece to his first chapter on Hippolytus (and Artemis) in the tragedy of that name, to quickly move over to the quest of god in elevated literature and philosophy, and, next, to the Hellenistic and Roman periods, where thanks to changes in religious mentalities, the epigraphic habit, and literary genres such as the novel there is much more to be found. More recently, Jameson 1999 ranged these aspects among what he calls 'the obscure in Athenian Religion', and left them out of consideration.

In most textbooks on Greek religion one looks in vain for the two testimonies of very personal, individual and specific devotion with which I opened the present section. What one keeps bumping into is a mantra-like repetition in often identical terms of the assertion that in terms of religion the individual Greek functions only as part of the

---

late antiquity there is now: K. Bowes, *Private Worship, Public Values, and Religious Change in late Antiquity* (Cambridge 2008). And cf. next note.

[356] There is nearly no contributor to the recent volume of Bodel & Olyan 2008, the first book to explore the religious dimensions of the family and the households in antiquity, who does not endorse its editors in underlining the near total neglect of this sector of ancient religious culture in modern scholarship. One finds it all summarized in the words of J.Z. Smith as quoted by K. van der Toorn (*ibid.* p. 20): "Considered globally, domestic religion is the most widespread form of religious activity; perhaps due to its very ubiquity, it is also the least studied. This is especially true of domestic religion in the past." The complexity of the terminology (household or family religion) is touched upon throughout the book. For ancient Greece see: Faraone *ibid.* 211 ff.

polis or as part of a group within that *polis*.[357] The consequence may be that together with the notion of 'religion' as a modern construct, we are also invited to completely eradicate the element 'private' within what we so far have called religion.[358] Humphreys 2004, 196: "We need to problematize our own ideas about the privateness of religion."[359]

Not to the extent, one may hope, that we are asked to ignore the thousands of votive gifts and inscriptions, which, scattered all over the Mediterranean world and generally dedicated by one or few persons, are testimonies of, in the most explicit sense of the word, private and personal religiosity.[360] The great majority do not have a written text. The ones that do, may display the name of the giver, an address to the deity, and if we are lucky, the reason for the gift, about which, however, the nature and form of the votive object may also give some clue. All this is too well-known to need documentation, but I do not wish to follow modern textbooks in ignoring or underestimating the topic. Not only because there comes a point where 'defamiliarizing' our Greeks degenerates into 'dehumanizing' them. My main consideration is that here we will get a view of another avenue to cope

---

[357] Cf. Auffarth 1994b, 19 n. 82: "Das Individuum agiert im religiösen Ritual in der Regel als Teil oder Vertreter einer Gruppe, zumindest der Familie;" Price 1999, 89: "One should see the individual as a basic unit operating within the overall framework of the private and public worship of the gods" (but here 'private' seems to concern the family); Sourvinou-Inwood 2000b, 44: "The individual was without doubt the primary, the basic, cultic unit *in polis religion*" (my italics); L. Bruit-Zaidman, *Le commerce des dieux. Eusebeia, essay sur la piété en Grèce ancienne* (Paris 2001) 13, explicitly announces that her study on Greek piety will shun "la piété en domaine séparé" since "l'histoire de la piété est une parti de l'histoire de la cité." Mikalson 2005, 182: "The individual is pious and wins the favour (*charis*) of the gods by following the traditional customs of his or her own city-state." See for criticism of these positions D. Boedeker, in: Bodel & Olyan 2008, 229 f. On such claims as "The oikos is fundamental, the frame from within which the individual experienced his world, the building block with which the society of the polis was made," see the refreshing caveats in Parker 2005, 10–13.

[358] As for instance Purvis 2003, 4, with 128 nn. 9 and 10, justly remarks against Bruit-Schmidt 1992, 14–15. This does not imply that one should underestimate the complications involved in an attempt to distinguish between 'state' and 'private' cults. The, hopefully not too bold, distinction that I will adopt is that private cults (as opposed to domestic or house cults) are based on personal initiative and funding. They were a matter of personal choice, the initiative (except for permission or control) not being subject to any intervention by *polis* or *deme*. On recent attempts to ban the term 'religion' from historical discourse (and the nonsense of that) see p. 551.

[359] She makes this remark, however, in a context far outreaching the present issue.

[360] This is not necessarily less true when the dedication of a personal votive gift is inspired by social motives as for instance in rituals of maturation, initiation, marriage etc., nor when they are phrased in fixed formulas.

with the (potentially) confusing plurality of the polytheistic world: namely by temporarily (or in few cases permanently) ducking out of it by focusing on one god as an 'elect' centre of religious attention. In this section I am indebted to a number of important studies by my former colleagues Harry Pleket and Folkert van Straten.[361] Several relevant aspects, especially so-called henotheistic tendencies, will receive a more elaborate treatment in Chapter III.

I opened this section with two samples of an extremely 'singular' form of personal devotion. Before continuing our search for similar phenomena in the domain of private cult, it may be expedient to pay some more attention to the prevalence and impact of the most general expression of personal devotion: the votive dedication. In giving a rough idea of the numbers of personal dedications I restrict myself to the anatomical votives as the most obvious witnesses of personal (and functional) piety.[362] After Rouse 1902, Van Straten 1981 was the first[363] to collect and discuss the ex-votos that had come to his knowledge and listed 56 samples of human body parts, mainly from healing centres like those of Asklepios, Amphiaraos, Amynos and Heros Iatros, not including the epigraphical records mentioning many more. Subsequently, S.B. Aleshire[364] counted the records of 137 dedications[365] for the Athenian Asklepieion alone, plus some 200 dedications

---

[361] Pleket 1981; Van Straten 1974, 1981, espec. 94 f.; 1984. I herewith gratefully commemorate the good times of our co-operation, *inter alia* resulting in our common (with J.M. Bremer and P.A. Meijer) volume, Versnel 1981a, to which in the same vein, I contributed 'Religious Mentality in Ancient Prayer.' More recently, Purvis 2003 devoted a timely monograph to the evidence of three well-documented private cults in Classical Greece.

[362] This means that I pass over in silence, just to mention one example, the more than 100,000 little votive lead figurines found in the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta (R.M. Dawkins, *The Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia* [London 1929] 249–284) or the uncountable number of needles, pins, braces for clothes found in sanctuaries all over Greece, for which see: I. Kilian, Weihungen an Eileithyia und Artemis Orthia, *ZPE* 31 (1978) 219–222.

[363] On this long period of silence since Rouse's work his mildly sardonic comments at p.105 are recommended reading.

[364] 'The Economics of Dedication at the Athenian Asklepieion', in: T. Linders & A. Alroth (edd.), *Economics of Cult in the Ancient Greek World. Proc. Uppsala Symposium* 1990 (Uppsala 1992) 85–98; *eadem, The Athenian Asklepieion* (Amsterdam 1989), espec. 37–51.

[365] They can be largely dated to the fourth and second centuries BC. See for the differentiation of these inscriptions Aleshire (1989) p. 87 and for the rather heterogeneous constitution of the group dedicants p. 92. Cf. also A. Scholl, ΑΝΑΘΗΜΑΤΑ ΤΩΝ ΑΡΧΑΙΩΝ. Die Akropolisvotive aus dem 8. bis frühen 6. Jahrhundert v. Chr und die Staatswerdung Athens, *JDAI* 121 (2006) 1–174.

on stone, most of them anatomical.[366] In 1996 B. Forsén produced a collection of all the anatomical ex-votos *in stone* (mainly reliefs) in the Aegean area (Greece and the islands) of the archaic and classical periods (169 specimens).[367] Beyond the domain of anatomical dedications, G. Schörner[368] treats the Hellenistic and Roman periods, with for the Greek mainland alone 1240 votive objects bearing an inscription, and 100 votive reliefs. These collections still do not cover the total of existent votive objects and inscriptions, and this total, as witness for instance the epigraphical inventories, is only a tiny fraction of what must have existed before most of them were cleared, destroyed, thrown away or just got lost.[369] All authors mentioned are explicit on the broad social texture of the dedicants and the more or less even proportions in gender.[370]

The cave of Vari, being itself an exceptional sample of a votive gift, was a centre of lively pious activity. Not only was our *nympholeptos* commemorated by later visitors but the grotto has also yielded a host of the usual modest votive gifts for the nymphs.[371] So has the cave,

---

[366] The remarkable discrepancy between the 908 names of worshippers listed in the temple inventories of the Asklepieion and the 72 names in those of the other Acropolis inventories (D. Harris, *The Treasures of the Parthenon and the Erechtheion* [Oxford 1995] 223 f., 228) may be explained with T. Linders, *JHS* 117 (1997) 258, by the exclusion of names in order to keep the inscriptions brief.

[367] B. Forsén, *Griechische Gliederweihungen. Eine Untersuchung zu ihrer Typologie und ihrer religions-und sozialgeschichtlichen Bedeutung* (Helsinki 1996). For a brief, but delightfully detailed summary of body parts in religious sanctuaries see: S. Guettel Cole, *Landscapes, Gender, and Ritual Space: The Ancient Greek Experience* (Berkeley-Los Angeles 2004) 171–174.

[368] G. Schörner, *Votive im römischen Griechenland. Untersuchungen zur späthellenistischen und kaiserzeitlichen Kunst- und Religionsgeschichte* (Stuttgart 2003). See there for the abundant literature, also with recent findings. For Italy the volumes of the *Corpus delle stipe votive in Italia* are a treasure house.

[369] As to inscriptions in general, R.P. Duncan-Jones, *PBSR* 31 (1963) 159–177 calculated that the number of the ones that have been recovered does not exceed 5% of what must have been produced in antiquity.

[370] This is different with relief dedications in healing sanctuaries with their frequent focus on the family. Here the dedications by women form a majority and almost always portray them as members of their family. See F.T. van Straten, Votives and Votaries in Greek Sanctuaries, in: Schachter 1992, 247–290. Parker 2005, Ch. 2 'Those with whom I sacrifice', pp. 37–49, on sacrifices made by the family (and friends) *en groupe,* also discusses these family reliefs and gives a list at pp. 45–49. On the phenomenological differences between men and women on votive reliefs see: Klöckner 2011, Ch. 2.2.5, who calculates a different gender proportion on the total of votive reliefs, namely 600 female and 1000 male worshippers.

[371] From the 6th until mid 3d c. BC. Herter, *RE* XVII, 1560; A. Wilhelm, Inschriften von der Grotte des Pan und der Nymphen bei Phyle, *Jahresh. Oest. Ak.* 25 (1929)

dedicated to Pan and the Nymphs, at Phyle on Mount Parnes.[372] This is the scene of Menander's *Dyskolos*, where the old mother offered a sacrifice because of a dream in which she saw Pan fettering her son. Caves, wild places, were by their very nature the home of the nymphs and their friend Pan,[373] gentle and helpful to those who honoured them, terrifying to those who did not show respect. We saw Socrates greeting Pan and the Nymphs in a kind and reverential way: "Dear Pan and you other gods who dwell in this place" during an outing.[374]

Nor was Archedamos the only *nympholeptos*. Literary sources and inscriptions record several others.[375] In the Korykian cave in the mountains of Parnassos, an inscription (*SEG* 3.406) was dedicated by a woman who "was seized as she listened to the Nymphs and Pan" (Νυμφῶν [καὶ] Πανὸς κλύουσα [name of the woman] ἐλήφ[θη]). A certain Appelles son of Apollonios, who dedicated a votive showing Acheloos, Hermes, and three Nymphai Naiades may have belonged to the same type, since he calls himself 'servant of the gods' (ὑπουργὸς

54; Nilsson, *GGR* I, 248, 250 f., 805; F. Muthmann, *Mutter und Quelle. Studien zur Quellenverehrung im Altertum und im Mittelalter* (Basel 1975) 98 ff. (p. 100: "Der Kult erreichte seinen Höhepunkt von etwa 400 v.Chr. ab bis weit ins 4. Jhdt. hinein"); Van Straten 1976, 19; 1981, 79.

[372] Findings go from the Mycenaean period into the Christian era. Herter *o.c.* preceding note; Muthmann *o.c.* preceding note, 90, 125.

[373] Caves as specific housing of Pan and Nymphs: K. Sporn, Höhlenheiligtümer in Griechenland, in: Chr. Frevel & H. von Hesberg (edd.), *Kult und Kommunikation. Medien in Heiligtümern der Antike* (2007) 39–62. More generally, wild places at some distance from civilization (see: Borgeaud 1979, 76–78) were favourite places for personal prayer and devotion. Aubriot 1992, 88 f. mentions mountain tops, caves, sources, groves, meadows and gardens (with reference to A. Motte, *Prairies et jardins dans la Grèce antique* [Bruxelles 1973]) and presents ample evidence. On caves as places of revelation, prophecy, mystic *ekstasis* etc. see now: Y. Ustinova, *Caves and the Ancient Greek Mind. Descending Underground in the Search for Ultimate Truth* (Oxford 2009), espec. Chs. 2 and 3.

[374] In Menander's *Dyskolos* 663 Knemon is called τῷδε γείτων τῷ θεῷ. This god is the local Pan and he is greeted in a friendly way: τὸν Πᾶνα χαίρειν (401, cf. 571 ff. and Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe* 2.38). On the emotional connotations of these greeting formulas: K. Ziegler, Zum Zeushymnus des Kallimachos, *RhM* 68 (1913) 336–364, espec. 345–351; E.W. Handley, *The Dyskolos of Menander* (London 1965) *ad* 433 ff.; J.F. García, Symbolic Action in the Homeric Hymns: The Theme of Recognition, *ClAnt* 21 (2002) 5–39, espec. 29–34. On its early history: R. Wachter, Griechisch χαῖρε: Vorgeschichte eines Grusswortes, *MH* 55 (1998) 65–75. On the double meaning of the word χαίρειν: W.H. Race, Aspects of Rhetoric and Form in Greek Hymns, *GRBS* 23 (1982) 5–14. Cf. also below p. 136 with n. 411.

[375] Himmelmann-Wildschütz 1957; Connor 1988, 160–162. Van Straten 1976, 19 n. 279 adds a few more.

τῶν θεῶν).[376] As may, also at Kos, a certain Chrysogonos whose epitaph says that he was ν(υν)φῶν λάτρις.[377] Votive gifts in grottos for the Nymphs and/or Pan abound. In a cave at Pitsa 50 km. west of Korinth painted wooden tablets were found with images of sacrifices and other votive gifts including statuettes of Pan dating from the 7th into the 3d c. BC.[378]

In the literary sources the term *nympholeptos* occurs in two meanings: 'taken by madness' and 'inspired (lit. taken/caught) by the nymphs'. The former, needless to say, tends to be used in a pejorative sense.[379] In cultivated circles these adorants may have been taken as odd, cracked or zealotic. In a mild tone this glimmers through in the words of the young man commenting on the religious extravagancies of his mother in Menander's *Dyskolos* (above p. 118), in whom one recognizes some characteristic traits of Theophrastos' *deisidaimon*.[380] For our present discussion it seems preferable to take them as extreme exponents of an attitude of intimacy and personal devotion to one or a few gods, which, as a more general phenomenon, comes into view for the first time in fourth century sources.

Recordings of dream visions with divine instructions emerge already earlier, especially in the context of Pan and the Nymphs. Gradually their numbers increase, also for other gods,[381] as does the inclusion of divine instructions and commands, which in later votive inscriptions are accounted for by expressions such as 'on the instruction of' (κατὰ κέλευσιν, κατὰ πρόσταγμα, κατ' ἐπιταγήν *vel similia*), which become

---

[376] Halikarnassos 2nd c. BC. *SEG* 16.648; Van Straten 1976, 19 n. 280; Pleket 1981, 161. The author dedicates the (representation of) the Numphai Naiades to the *Anakes* (Sovereigns), whoever they may be. A dedication to the Nymphs at Koressia (Samos) by a man called Nymphios (Samos, 2nd/3rd c. AD) suggests, as noted by Chaniotis (EBGR 2004 no. 104), also a personal devotion to the Nymphs. If this was his name from birth, it may point to a family tradition of devotion to the Nymphs, as Donald Mastronarde suggests.

[377] R. Herzog, *Koische Forschungen und Funde* (Leipzig 1899) no. 163.

[378] Nilsson, *GGR* I² 248.

[379] On different types and appreciations of theolepsy see: Dodds 1951, Ch. 3; Himmelmann-Wildschütz 1957; F. Pfister, Ekstase, in: *RAC* 4 (1959) 944–987, espec. 970; W.D. Smith, So-called Possession in Pre-Christian Greece, *TAPhA* 96 (1965) 403–426; Connor 1988.

[380] Van Straten 1976, 19.

[381] Van Straten 1976, 14 and 21–27, collects 300 cases of divine appearances in dreams in archaeological representations with the following subdivision of the percentages: Asklepios and his family 38, Zeus 12/13, Apollo and Artemis each 7/8, Nymphs and Pan together 4/5, Meter 3/4, Athena 2/3, the rest 1.

practically identical with 'according to a dream' (καθ ὕπνον, κατ' ὄναρ, etc.).[382] The majority of these expressions belong to the post-classical period, but the phenomenon they designate is well attested for the fourth century, especially in the cult of Asklepios who is famous for giving instructions in dreams (see Ch. V). In Hellenistic and particularly Imperial times seeing gods and receiving instructions from gods assumed epidemic proportions.[383]

Hand in hand with these dream instructions, it is in the same fourth century that a decisively hierarchical language emerges in the relations between men and gods as expressed in terms of submission or even servility on the part of the worshipper (θεραπευτής, ὑπουργός, etc.), and of sovereignty on the part of the gods (κύριος, δέσποτης etc.).[384] We will discuss this and other elements of this type of religiosity in Chapter III and find that, "even before the Hellenistic period we can find traces of a close affective relationship between deity and worshipper, i.e. of a serving worshipper having the clear sense of depending on an imperious deity" (Pleket 1981, 155). Interestingly, terms such as *therapeutes* or *latris* originated as professional terms for temple slavery, but might acquire a more personal intensification in the sense of personal devotion to the god. In the *Phoenissae* of Euripides the Phoenician women given as slaves to Apollo are described individually as servant of Phoibos (Φοίβῳ λάτρις). In Euripides' tragedy named after its protagonist, Ion, who, throughout the tragedy, displays an extraordinary personal devotion to the god Apollo, was a temple slave (λατρεύων)[385]

---

[382] See the discussion and rich evidence of these expressions in Van Straten 1976, 13. Cf. Nock 1972, I 47; Bömer 1961, 207 f.; Pleket 1981, 154 f. and 158 f. For the analogous Latin expressions *ex iussu, e visu* etc. and the concomitant mentality see: Veyne 1986, espec. 266–276.

[383] A good survey in Lane Fox 1986, Ch. 4 "Seeing the Gods."

[384] Pleket 1981, 159–171 (on worshippers as servants of the god); 171–183 (on gods as powerful masters, kings, tyrants).

[385] On the social symbolism of Ion's position see: Ch. Segal, Euripides' Ion: Generational Passage and Civic Myth, in: M.W. Padilla (ed.), *Rites of Passage in Ancient Greece: Literature, Religion, Society* (London Toronto 1999) 66–108. For the phenomenon of personal religiosity of temple servants, though restricted to Roman areas, see: U. Egelhaaf-Gaiser, Wohnen bei den Göttern: Zur Lebensqualität und persönlichen Religiosität des niedrigen Personals im Tempel, in: Chr. Basch, U. Egelhaaf-Gaiser & R. Stepper (edd.), *Zwischen Krise und Alltag. Antike Religionen im Mittelmeerraum* (Stuttgart 1999) 143–159.

but exclaims "Oh that I may serve Phoibos forever" (151). In fifth century literature, however, these are exceptions.[386]

This attitude of submission receives a striking expression again in the same 4th century: believers in moments of distress might kneel before the gods from whom they expected help and whom they implored: above all healer gods such as Asklepios, but also Artemis, Herakles Pankrates, the Eleusinian deities. Van Straten 1974 has collected the evidence, which clearly contradicts the traditional idea that this gesture was only introduced under the influence of oriental religiosity.[387]

Altogether, what we see here are the first signs of the henotheistic religiosity that we will discuss more extensively in Chapter III. They are "part of the trend to individualise relationships between men and the gods."[388]

Archedamos and probably also Pantalkes pushed their devotion to the frontiers by their choice for an eremitic life in cohabitation with and daily cultic service to the gods of their choice.[389] The former indeed literally 'moved in' with the gods. Another nympholeptos, Onesagoras, left his name on a great number of sherds in a cave in Cyprus from pots dedicated to a nymph or nymphs variously described as

---

[386] So rightly Bömer 1961, 44–47; Pleket 1981, 164. But see St. Georgoudi below n. 413.

[387] Cf. also Pleket 1981, 156 f. and see the discussion below Ch. V, pp. 411 f.

[388] Belayche 2010, 147, in the track of "Versnel and his followers." "A preference for one god became more common in Hellenistic times, when religion as embedded in the polis had become religion as a choice of differentiated groups," thus Bremmer 1994, 92 f.

[389] ξυνουσία is the term which is used consistently for such a type of cohabitation of human and god/hero in Philostratos' *Heroikos*. This much later work (3d c. AD) strikingly mirrors Archedamos' personal religiosity in the intimate devotion of a rustic recluse, inclusive the idyllic garden-ambiance, to the Heros Protesilaos, whose heroon is next to his own abode and with whom he socializes, meeting him everyday in his garden and kissing and embracing the hero (*Heroikos* pp. 131 ff.; 142–145 Kayser). On this very interesting literary piece: C. Bonner, Some Phases of Religious Feeling in Later Paganism, *HThR* 30 (1937) 119–141, espec. 132 ff.; C.P. Jones, Philostratus' Heroikos and its Setting in Reality, *JHS* 121 (2001) 139–149; H.D. Betz, Heroenverehrung und Christusglaube. Religionsgeschichtliche Beobachtungen zu Philostrats *Heroicus*, in: Cancik 1996, 119–139; English version in: Aiken & Maclean 2004. Another term for close and steady socializing with (the statue of) a god is προσομιλεῖν, which we already met in Plato *Leg.* IV, 716 B (above n. 345). It recurs with the same meaning in later antiquity e.g. in a letter by a certain Thessalos (probably not the methodist doctor) to emperor Claudius or Nero (*Cat.cod.astr.* VIII 3, p. 135, 28 and 31): μόνος πρὸς μόνον ὁμιλεῖν as an act of contemplation in front of the divine statue. See: F. Cumont, *Monuments Piot* 25 (1921/22) 77 ff. On the *monos pros monon* formula in later theosophy: E. Peterson, Herkunft und Bedeutung der μόνος πρὸς μόνον Formel bei Plotin, *Philol.* 88 (1933) 30–41.

sisters, thrice 'his sister' (ἡ αὐτοῦ ἀδελφή), twice 'his daughter', perhaps once also as 'the one who hearkens to her suitor'.[390] Instead of (or side by side with) cohabitation in the local sense of the word, this devotee boasts a relationship of a familial (and erotic?) nature. As such these nympholeptoi are extremes on a gliding scale of religious involvement. Other founders of private cults did not go as far. Far from thus detracting from their value as evidence of private religiosity, they show that such initiatives were not restricted to the category that Robin Lane Fox, writing on early Christians, once classified as 'religious overachievers'. Purvis 2003 gives a good impression of this category, besides Archedamos also providing an extensive discussion of two other representatives of private piety.

One[391] is a woman by the name of Xenokratia, "daughter of Xeniades and mother of Xeniades," who

> founded a sanctuary of Kephisos and dedicated to the gods sharing the altar (συνβώμοις) this gift in return for instruction (διδασκαλίας τόδε δῶρον).[392] Whoever wishes to is permitted to sacrifice for the fulfilment of good things.

We need not go into detail. The stele with the inscription (c. 400 BC) has a relief displaying a great number of gods and Xenokratia herself with her son. Its location together with some other findings, including another dedicatory inscription, point to a sanctuary near New Phaleron at the river Kephisos, a place that did not belong to the deme of the woman. Purvis 32 concludes:

> The dedication of the shrine helped to secure a favourable and stable relationship with local divinities, and no doubt with local residents who

---

[390] T.B. Mitford, The Nymphaeum of Kafizin, *Kadmos Suppl.* II (Berlin 1980); *SEG* 30.1608; BE 1981 no. 635. More lit. in Connor 1988, 163 n. 30. On the function of these pots: D. Malfitana, Θηρίκλεια ποτήρια: note per una rilettura. Ateneo (*Deipn.* XI 470e–472e) e alcuni kantharoi da un santuario cipriota, *NAC* 33 (2004) 217–247.

[391] Purvis 2003, 15–32, where all data and earlier literature. Cf. also L. Beschi, Culti stranieri e fondazioni private nell'Attica classica: Alcuni casi, *ASAA* 80 (2002) [2003] 13–42, who, besides the introduction of Bendis and Asklepios, also discusses the foundation by Xenokrateia.

[392] The accepted interpretation of this somewhat enigmatic text is that Xenokratia dedicated the sanctuary in gratitude for the *didaskalia* of her son, perhaps concerning a victory in poetical or musical competition. However, there is an identical expression in an inscription by a girl who dedicated a *pinax* with pictures of the gods: τόδε δῶρον διδασκαλίας θύεν τῷ βωλομένῳ ἐπιτελέστων ἀγαθῶν (M. Guarducci, in: *Phoros. Tribute to B.J. Meritt* [Locust Valley N.Y. 1974] 57–66), where it clearly means "a gift serving as instruction."

> visited the shrine, while it commemorated and celebrated the personal gratitude and prayers of the founders.

The second private founder is Xenophon, who, in an excursus in his *Anabasis* 5.3.4–11, tells us about the cult for Artemis of Ephesos that he founded, while in exile, at his estate at Skillos near Olympia in the Peloponnese in the early fourth c. BC.[393] Both land and cult foundation were paid for with the sacred money that was set aside as a tithe for Apollo and Artemis Ephesia by the generals of the Persian expedition after their safe return to Kerasos, a Greek city on the Black Sea. Xenophon is important as a source since he also reveals his attitudes about religion in his other writings. Scholars now tend to recognize his religious attitude as a reflection of traditional Greek piety and consider him a model in studies of typical Greek religious convictions and practice.[394] Xenophon describes the foundation as follows (3.5.9):

> He erected an altar and temple from the sacred money, and ever afterwards, tithing the produce of the land, he sacrificed to the goddess; and all the citizens and neighbours, men and women shared in the festival. The goddess provided to those who pitched their tents there barley, bread, wine, snacks and desserts, and a share of the animals sacrificed from the holy pasture and of those taken in the hunt.

Further on he lauds the sacred plot as being "full of trees" (11): "Around the temple itself is planted a grove of trees, which produce edible fruits in season" (12), once more evoking the 'utopian' atmosphere of (sacred) groves[395] as we already met them in the inscriptions of Archedamos and Pantalkes.[396]

Xenophon records (5.3.7) that he "bought land for the goddess where the god ordained" (τῇ θεῷ ὅπου ἀνεῖλεν ὁ θεός). "The god" must be Delphic Apollo. So here too the instruction comes from a god, albeit not in a dream, but more according to official custom, by

---

[393] This can be viewed as a 'branch cult' of the Ephesian goddess as mentioned above n. 311, but in this case a personal one. See: Purvis 2003, 97–100.

[394] Thus Purvis p.65. Cf. L. Bruit-Zaidman, *o.c.* above n. 87.

[395] Above. n. 353. But there may be some influence of the Persian *paradeisos* here (Purvis 2003, 104).

[396] Purvis 2003, 96, aptly adduces a passage from Xen. *Mem*. 3.8.10, where Socrates says that "shrines should be very conspicuous and off the beaten path, because such a site is pleasurable in that it enhances the experience of vision during worship and encourages pious behaviour of pilgrims as they approach." Visibility and isolated distance of shrines return as two of the most characteristic markers of outlying shrines in modern Greece in Nixon *o.c.* (above n. 346).

oracle. The benefices bestowed by the goddess on the participants of the festival surely must have won the cult-founder the gratitude of the local residents and the concomitant friendly attitude towards the new resident Xenophon may have been a welcome bonus, as Purvis notes. But she adds: "The practical benefits of Xenophon's cult should not detract from the motives of piety behind the foundation."

We have seen several modes of private devotion in action. Personal cult foundations on the one hand, personal acts of more modest types of votive religion on the other. Though related as to the reciprocal nature of their purposes and expectations, they differ in prestige. In both varying degrees of personal (material) advantage may have been involved, with respect to both gods and fellow humans. Even the humblest votive gifts are *inter alia* exponents of the *do ut des* principle. Self-esteem or a craving for social integration may have been a special concern in these cult foundations. Xenophon's prestigious initiative has often been (dis)qualified as a token of self-interest under the veil of piety. After all, being a foreigner in exile, it was important for him to obtain a *Sitz im Leben* amidst the local residents. A similar motive may have played a role for Xenokrateia whose *deme* of origin was not that of her foundation. And the same most pertinently pertained to the allochthonous Archedamos who sought a place for himself by settling with the (Attic) nymphs.

But what should interest us at this point is, first, that all these devotional initiatives, even those inspired by ritual wont or familial tradition, are individual, solitary acts presupposing personal decision and choice. This, of course, is most obvious in the case of a cult foundation or the initiative to organize a religious festival. They are less, but only relatively less, so in acts of common votive piety. In cases of serious illness it is up to the patient or the close relatives to decide on questions of whether and when a pilgrimage is in order, and to make a choice concerning the god and place best equipped for the medical operation. Even an outing to Pan or the Nymphs in their caves may involve planning, preparation and sometimes considerable effort,[397] and hence

[397] Many of the caves were situated in mountainous areas, difficult to reach or with complicated access. See e.g. the recently recovered Cave of Pan at Marathon: E. Lupu, The Sacred Law from the Cave at Marathon (*SEG* 36.267), *ZPE* 137 (2001) 119–124, with earlier literature. In order to be effective, ritual or cultic acts, especially those of the nature of votive actions, require effort and energy on the part of the worshipper, as is well argued by F.T. Naerebout, Spending Energy as an Important Part of Ancient Greek Religious Behaviour, *Proceedings of the International Symposium on*

requires a personal and often individual decision. Indeed, much of this type of private devotion tends to be focused on gods and places outside the centre of the *polis*, eccentric little rural sanctuaries (Pan, Nymphs) or distant centres of pilgrimage (Asklepios, Amphiaraos).[398] The second, and major, point relevant to the present issue is that, contrary to collective rituals such as regular sacrifices of *polis*, *deme, phratry* or family-group, the type of devotion under discussion presupposes an individual's special pious focus on one 'elect' god.

If some circumstances and expressions of personal devotion discussed so far betray a touch of 'eccentricity,' also in the spatial sense of that word, this does not imply that private acts and places of worship, including private sanctuaries, did not occur in city centres. They did,[399] and in abundance, just as did private sacrificial celebrations (τὰ ἱερὰ τὰ ἰδιωτικά as opposed to τὰ δημόσια [*LSA* no. 73, 6]).[400] Xenophon's foundation has been classified as the first of many *Kultstiftungen*[401] which could be located anywhere on private lots or even on common ground but which were liable to official authorization and surveyance

---

Ancient Mediterranean World, 16–18 April 2004 at the University of Tokyo = Kodai, Journal of Ancient History 13/14 (2003/2004) [2007] 9–18. This is especially apparent in pilgrimage as argued by I. Rutherford, Theoric Crisis: The Danger of Pilgrimage in Greek Religion and Society, *SMSR* 61 (1995) 275–292, with the conclusion: "the idea that pilgrimage is risky can be seen as part of a system of beliefs on which its value in society is grounded." On the importance of remoteness see: A. Fear, A Journey to the End of the World, in: Elsner & Rutherford 2005, 319–331, espec. 328 f.

[398] F. Graf, Heiligtum als Ritual: Das Beispiel der griechisch-römischen Asklepieia, in: Schachter 1992, 159–199, espec. 168–178. Riethmüller I, 2005, 364–369 explicitly connects the character of the pilgrims' center with 'Landschafts- bzw. extraurbane Heiligtümer'. On the sanctuary of Amphiaraos see: Sineux 2007, Chs. 2 and 3.

[399] M. Jost, Sanctuaires publics et sanctuaires privés, *Ktema* 23 (1998) 301–305. See for gods typically worshipped in 'Hauskult' below n. 408 and Appendix II n. 5.

[400] On private sacrifices offered during public festivals: St. Georgoudi, Sacrifice dans le monde grec: de la cité aux particuliers. Quelques remarques, *Ktema* 23 (1998) 325–334.

[401] B. Laum, *Stiftungen in der griechischen und römischen Antike. Ein Beitrag zur antiken Kulturgeschichte* I (Berlin 1914) 41; 61; 243; O. Lendle, *Kommentar zu Xenophons Anabasis. Bücher 1–7* (Darmstadt 1995) 321. Cf. Purvis 2003, 117 on the similarities and differences among them. One very remarkable, exceptionally well documented private foundation would not have come off badly in her book. I mean the temple and cult for Aphrodite at Delos founded by a prominent citizen Stesileos (late 4th c. BC). The cult named after him was continued by his descendants into the second century and was a serious rival of the official Delian Aphrodite cult. See: C. Durvye, Cult d'Aphrodite à Délos: Culte privé et public à l'époque hellénistique, *REG* 119 (2006) 83–113. On the curious accumulation of statues and altars, founded by Artemidoros of Perge at Thera (second half of the third c. BC) as a peculiar token of private religious initiative, see most recently: Graf *o.c.* (above n. 187) 107–112.

by the polis.[402] Private initiatives might harm public religious property, as appears from decrees and laws against the placing of statues and votives in sanctuaries. They could even harm other private sacred properties.[403] More generally they might also interfere with the general religious interests of the *polis*. It is this concern that made Plato *Leg.* 10.909d propose a law that

> no man shall possess a shrine in his private house (ἐν ἰδίαις οἰκίαις); when a man feels himself moved to offer sacrifice, he shall go to the public temples (πρὸς τὰ δημόσια ἴτω) for that purpose and deliver his offerings to the priests of either sex whose business is to consecrate them.[404]

In the ensuing passage (*Leg.* 10.909e–910a) he gives the reason for his proposal. It proves that reality might differ from the ideal that he had in mind:[405]

> It is customary for all women especially, and for people who are in any way sick, in peril, or in distress, whatever the nature of the distress, and conversely, when they have just obtained some way out of their problems, to dedicate whatever is at hand at the time, vow to offer sacrifices and promise to found shrines for gods and demi-gods and children of gods. As they recall the frequent visions they saw while awake because of their fear, or those sent in their dreams, they provide a remedy for each individually by founding altars and sanctuaries, and with them fill all homes, villages, open spaces, and any place they happen to have had such experiences.[406]

There can be no doubt that these types of private cults, in or adjacent to the house or at nearby private plots were rife in 4th century Athens. It also appears that founding such cults was not restricted to foreigners

---

[402] For healthy doubts about the stringency of its application see: Parker 1996, 216.

[403] For the last see: J.D. Sosin, Unwelcome Dedications: Public Law and Private Religion in Hellenistic Laodicea by the Sea, *CQ* 55 (2005) 130–139. For the first *ibid.* 132 f., with the relevant literature.

[404] Bremmer 1994, 92 f. adds: "It is highly interesting to note that according to Plato this 'privatization' of religion apparently went hand in hand with a growing interest in magic (11.933a)."

[405] Earlier, in *Leg.*5.738b–c, he had already complained that people, often "following visions or inspirations from the gods" institute sacrifices with various rituals and for such reasons dedicate statues, altars, temples, and they mark off a portion of land for each.

[406] Translations partly by Purvis 2003, 7–10, where see a discussion of these private foundations.

but that local residents, both metics and citizens, had their share[407] as well, quite apart from their more institutionalized cults of the traditional house gods.[408] However, the majority of these sanctuaries, altars, and 'the forest of idols' that Paul still observed at Athens,[409] have vanished together with the buildings to which they belonged. When recovered, their anonymity usually tends to veil their true nature.

All these private cults are characterized by more or less intense, more or less temporary, more or less spontaneous, but always personal attention focussed on an 'elect' god. If, as we shall argue in Chapter III, hymns to a god may be called 'henotheistic moments in a polytheistic context', that expression is even more appropriate to personal prayer in the private religiosity under discussion. During these periods of intensified communication and indeed socialization *a* god becomes '*the* god'. As such the deity may be elected as "among all the gods the only one whom he really worshipped and honoured" (ὃν μόνον πάντων θεῶν ἀληθῶς προσεκύνει τε κἀτίμα, Babrios 20).[410] In more general terms Hippolytus (Eur. *Hipp.* 104) expresses the same idea: "each person will care for another god or man" (ἄλλοισι ἄλλος θεῶν τε κἀνθρώπων μέλει). We have seen and will see again that in the context

[407] A parallel may be found in the private foundations of chapels in modern Greece (not seldom inspired by dreams and visions, as in antiquity: Ch. Stewart, *Dreams and the Devil: Moral Imagination in Modern Greek Culture* [Princeton 1991] 83–91) by an individual or a family for 'their own' Saint, with the concomitant pious maintenance, the irregular periodical acts of private devotion and the regular public services on the Saint's name-day.

[408] See for the gods of the house like Hestia, Zeus Ktesios, Zeus Herkeios, Apollo Aguieus, Hekate, Hermes: Parker 2005, 13–20; Brulé 2005a, and on Zeus Herkeios and Ktesios in particular Appendix II n. 5. As *heros/theos geiton* (below p. 136 f.) especially the latter three of them may have enjoyed personal devotion as well, as we have seen, and will see again in Chapter IV.

[409] "The city full of idols:" Acts 17:16. Cf. R.E. Wycherley, Minor Shrines in Ancient Athens, *Phoenix* 24 (1970) 283–295.

[410] There is a nice parallel of a somewhat different nature in the so-called 'oath of the Isis mysts', that we posses in two versions (*P.S.I.* 1162 and 1290 = Totti 1985, nos. 8b and 8a) as elucidated by R. Merkelbach, Der Eid der Isismysten, *ZPE* 1 (1967) 55–73. The initiand swears an oath by the almighty god Osiris, whose omnipotent qualities are enlarged upon, but ends up with the phrase: ἐπόμνυμαι δὲ καὶ οὓς π[ροσκυνῶ θ]εοὺς συντηρήσειν καὶ φυλά[ξειν] (but I also swear by the gods whom I worship that they assist [the great god] in keeping an eye on and watching the oath). Similar combinations of one great god and a (no less powerful) local one, believed to be a personal patron, is quite common in Egyptian prayers and perseveres in Christian texts *E.g. P.Harr.* (1936) 54 and *P.Oxy.* 1926, δέσποτα μου θεὲ παντοκράτωρ καὶ ἅγιε Φιλόξενε πρόστατα μου (also in: *NDIEC* 2 [1982] 40 f., and cf. the texts collected in: A.S. Hunt & C.C. Edgar, *Select Papyri* I (London 1932) nos. 111 f., 120 f., 133 f., 136 f., 125.

of intimate contact the god may be addressed with the entreating term 'dear', 'dearest' (Men. *Samia* 444, "dearest Apollo" χαῖρ', Ἄπολλον φίλτατε),[411] but also and often for the same reason with supplicatory deferential titles such as ἄναξ or κύριε. A votive inscription "for my health/recovery" from Lisos (Crete)[412] is dedicated to κυρίῳ Ἀσκληπίῳ καὶ τῇ κυρίᾳ Ὑγείᾳ. In such circumstances even little neighbour Aguieus may be addressed with elevated titles: καὶ σὺ Φοῖβ' ἄναξ Ἀγυιεῦ and in Ar. *Vesp.* 875: ὦ δέσποτ' ἄναξ, γεῖτον Ἀγυιεῦ.

The presence of the god *in effigie* (as a statue or in a dream) no doubt fostered the intimate, emotional atmosphere of personal communication. We have observed the central role of proximity in the case of deities like Pan and the Nymphs in rural areas as indicated with deictic locatives, one person in Menander even being called τῷδε γείτων τῷ θεῷ (neighbour to the god), as well as comparable expressions in an urban ambiance for e.g. Apollo Aguieus. A personal relationship between man and god is not least induced by contiguity.[413] Hence, most of the gods and heroes that we have met in this section may qualify for inclusion into the category of the *heros/theos geiton.* Among Greeks, as in other pre-industrial cultures, a good relationship with the neighbour was of paramount importance.[414] This is not different between man and god as several expressions concerning gods or heroes as highly valued neighbours testify.[415]

---

[411] On φίλος in prayer or other addresses to a god see: Pulleyn 1997, 199 n. 9.

[412] A. Martínez Fernández, *ZPE* 145 (2003) 131 ff. (2nd c. BC).

[413] Cf. Ar. *Vesp.* 389–394, where Philokleon prays to the hero Lykon, with the words "Oh Lord Lykos, my neighbour hero (Λύκε δέσποτα, γείτων ἥρως)…. now pity and rescue your very own neighbour" (Lykos' shrine was next to a lawcourt, the second home of the 'professional' juror Philokleon). In one of her many refreshing, empathic and informative studies, *'Athanatous therapeuein.* Réflexions sur des femmes au service des dieux', in: Dasen & Piérart 2005, 69–82, St. Georgoudi touches on this aspect of close neighbourhood between goddess and women and its consequences, especially in the case of the *kleidouchos*, the woman who keeps the key of the sanctuary (pp. 80 f.), and promises a study on these "relations intimes qui se tissent entre la divinité et la personne qui se voue à son service," the result of which can be that "les deux entités s'identifient, deviennent interchangeables, en abolisant ainsi la ligne de séparation entre le divin et l'humain." We are reminded here of the special case of Ion, which after all may not have been so exceptional at all.

[414] On the emotional and social aspects of neighbourhood see: W. Schmitz, *Nachbarschaft und Dorfgemeinschaft im archaischen und klassischen Griechenland* (Berlin 2004) *passim,* espec. 52–59; 160 f.

[415] Rusten 1983 gives a selection and discusses several prayers expressing gratitude or request to this type of heroes or gods. Bremmer 1994, 31 in this connection points out the importance of theophoric names with the element *geiton* (e.g. Athanogeiton), which also may be suggestive of a personal relationship with a god. Cf. Parker 2000, 62.

Among the familiar addresses to a god φίλε, φίλτατε prevails.[416] Predicates that express a personal relationship occur as well. In an inscription of Pergamon (2nd c. BC), for instance, on a statuette of the mother of the gods, the dedicant calls the goddess τὴν ἰδίαν προστάτιν 'his own guardian'.[417] We have encountered names of gods specified with a person's name in the genitive (e.g. Men Tiamou, above n. 152) indicating probably the person who has founded a cult of that god and thus may boast a special relationship with him.[418] However, "the bond between a man and a god never becomes so close that it could be expressed by a singular possessive pronoun: Greeks do not pray 'my god!' as Hittites and Hebrews do."[419] So, from a terminological point of view the title of the present sub-section may seem to be a misnomer. From a conceptual viewpoint, however, it appears to be fully justified.

---

[416] Burkert 1996b, 9 f.

[417] Van Straten 1981, 104 n. 192, with a few more samples of this type.

[418] They are found mostly in Asia Minor in Imperial times. Similar combinations in Roman areas of the type Silvanus Curtianus (L. Maio, L'ara di Silvanus Curtianus presso Benevento, *RAL* 31 [1976] 291–295) abound: Nock 1972, I, 41; cf. 156 f.; Bömer III (1961), 444 = (202) n. 7; C.P. Jones, The Plancii of Perge and Diana Planciana, *HSCPh* 80 (1976) 231–237. For classical Greece one might adduce the theophoric names (especially those with the suffix *-dotos* or *-doros*) as evidence for a personal bond of the parents of the so-named with one particular god. As the name is often hereditary in a family, as well as for other reasons, this argument is doubtful. See the important discussion in Parker 2000. It may be different, I would suggest, in the case of names such as Theophilos, Theodoros, Philotheos, on which see Parker 2000, 78 f. The element *theo-* can hardly refer to 'the gods' and must rather hint at a certain god, who however is not named. Why not? Because he is 'my or our [one and only] god'? Interestingly, F. Mora, Nomi teofori e politeismo greco: prospettive di ricerca, in: G. Sfameni Gasparro (ed.), Ἀγαθὴ Ἐλπίς. *Studi storico-religiosi in onore di Ugo Bianchi* (Roma 1994) 177–186, in a brief but full survey of the structure of theophoric names and their distribution in various periods, notes that composites with θεός (and Apollon, and Ιυθ-) become very popular in the 4th century.

[419] Thus, Burkert 1985, 274, showing that the few apparent exceptions are of a different type. He elaborated his views in Burkert 1996b, 3–14. The Athenian Diophantos sought Asklepios' assistance, emphasising both the god's unique power (μόνος εἶ σύ, μάκαρ θεῖε, σθένων) and his personal devotion (ὅπως σ'ἐσίδω, τὸν ἐμὸν θεόν) (*IG* II² 4514), but then we are in the second century AD. On 'my, your, his god(s) in Mesopotamian and Israelitic religions, see: H. Vorländer, *Mein Gott: Vorstellungen vom persönlichen Gott im Alten Testament und im Alten Orient* (Neukirchen 1975); R. Albertz, *Persönliche Frömmigkeit und offizielle Religion: Religionsinterner Pluralismus im alten Israel und Babylon* (Stuttgart 1978); K. van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel: Community and Change in the Forms of Religious Life* (Leiden 1996), espec. Ch. 4: The Veneration of Family Gods. For numerous Latin inscriptions with the terms *meus, suus, domesticus* as epithets of deities see: Nock 1972, I, 41.

'Our God': henotheistic traits in religious associations

Finally we will pay attention to another way of focusing one's personal devotion on one particular god. That is by joining one of the private religious associations that come into view in the 4th century and mushroomed in the Hellenistic period and later.[420] We know little about the religious calibre of all those groups of *orgeones, thiasotai, eranistai* etc. As they often have the nature of a dining and drinking-club the members' social interests may have outrivaled religious zeal.[421] We will restrict ourselves here to the congregations that gathered in the cults of 'new and/or foreign gods'[422] (who sometimes were either less foreign or less new—or both—than handbooks make us believe).[423] Cults and adherents of Cybele, Bendis and Sabazios and a few other less prominent immigrants, make their appearance in 4th century sources. As far as the evidence allows us to see these congregations

---

[420] There is a very useful discussion with a full list of Athenian associations in Parker 1996, Appendix 4, 333–342, with references to more detailed discussions of separate associations elsewhere in the book. The issue recently regained its place in the centre of scholarly interest. I single out I.N. Arnaoutoglou, *Thusias heneka kai sunousias. Private Religious Associations in Hellenistic Athens* (Athens 2003), with the three 4th c. priestesses (below n. 426) at 91–94.

[421] Not always, however. D. Brabant, Persönliche Gotteserfahrung und religiöse Gruppe: die Therapeutai des Asklepios in Pergamon, in: A. Gutsfeld & D.-A. Koch (edd.), *Vereine, Synagogen und Gemeinden im kaiserzeitlichen Kleinasien* (Tübingen 2006) 61–75, argues that the exclusiveness of the association of *Therapeutai* for Asklepios at Pergamum did not rest on the social status but rather on the personal religious experience of their members such as Aelius Aristides and Galenos, who maintained close devotional ties with the deity. Of course, one motive does not exclude the other. On Aristides' Asklepios-devotion see: A. Petsalis-Diomidis, *Truly beyond wonders: Aelius Aristides and the cult of Asklepios* (Oxford 2010).

[422] In *TER UNUS* 102–131, I have devoted an extensive discussion to these gods, the nature of their cults, their impact on sections of the Athenian population and the reactions they provoked among the authorities of the polis. Important studies published since are: Garland 1992; Bremmer 1994 (brief summary of the main characteristics); C. Auffarth, Aufnahme und Zurückweisung 'Neuer Götter' im spätklassischen Athen: Religion gegen die Krise, Religion in der Krise?, in: Eder 1995, 337–365; Parker 1996, 152–198; Allan 2004; M.A. Flower, Athenian Religion and the Peloponnesian War, in: O. Palagia (ed.), *Art in Athens during the Peloponnesian War* (Cambridge 2009) 1–23. And see below n. 426.

[423] In his discussion of the 'New Gods' (see preceding note) Parker warns against sloppy labels. The gods Pan and Asklepios (on the entry at Athens of the latter see most recently: Riethmüller I, 2005, 241–250; Wickkiser 2008, Ch. 4) came to Athens in the early and late 5th century respectively. Though acknowledged as Greek gods, in the eyes of the Athenians they yet were *xenikoi theoi*. Cybele had a complex migratory history, she is attested in Greece already in the 6th century and received a sanctuary at Athens in the 5th. See most recently: M.H. Munn, *The Mother of the Gods, Athens, and the Tyranny of Asia: A Study of Sovereignty in Ancient Religion* (CUP 2006).

differ from the established cult types in that they were entered by free choice, that at least some of them are marked by ecstatic behaviour and that they recruited their clientèle predominantly among women.[424] The most revolutionary and least debatable novelty was that the adherents did not make a secret of their exclusive affection[425] for one god. This was probably the main reason why they were suspected as a potential threat to the religious stability and the *nomoi* of the polis. Suspicion and hostility provoked stigmatization, which of course may have had a distorting effect on the scanty evidence we have. It is beyond doubt, however, that stigmatization in its turn provoked repression and indeed led to the prosecution of (at least) three 'priestesses', two of whom were executed. According to our (late) sources, the accusations included: 'assembling thiasoi', 'making love potions', 'mocking the mysteries', 'initiating in rites of foreign gods', 'dealing in drugs and charms', 'impiety'. Introducing foreign cults and the suspicion of practicing magic are, throughout antiquity, two sides of one medal and at Athens might provoke an *asebeia* process of which there were several in the 4th c. Most notorious is the one against Socrates on accusations not unrelated to the ones just mentioned.[426]

---

[424] We must realize, however, that practically without exception our sources represent the negative image constructed by male observers. Bremmer 1994 91 f., tends to emphasize female interest. Parker, with reference to *TER UNUS* 121 n. 101, is more cautious on this point. On another modern assumption, namely "the scholarly tendency to see the new gods, and especially those with ecstatic rites, as the sort of thing the lower classes might be more prone to indulge in," Allan 2004, 126 comments that "it betrays the same misconceptions that have long obscured the prevalence of 'magic' at all levels of ancient Greek society."

[425] Unique 'affection' by no means implies refusal to pay reverence to the gods of the *polis*. See Chapter III p. 244 on the definition of henotheism.

[426] See *TER UNUS* 115–118 for the 'priestesses'; 123–130 for *asebeia* processes including the one against Socrates, where I argue for a relationship between the indictments against Socrates and those against the priestesses of the new cults. Parker 1996, 199–217, espec. 214–217, after a judicious discussion, very close to mine, seems to endorse this view. Some relevant recent studies on asebeia- and related trials, especially those of the three 'priestesses': C. Cooper, Hyperides on the Trial of Phryne, *Phoenix* 49 (1995) 303–318; L.-L. O'Sullivan, Athenian Impiety Trials in the Late Fourth Century B.C., *CQ* 47 (1997) 136–152; D. Collins, Theoris of Lemnos and the Criminalization of Magic in Fourth-Century Athens, *CQ* 51 (2001) 477–493; K. Trampedach, Gefährliche Frauen. Zu athenischen Asebieprozessen im 4. Jahrhundert v. Chr., in: R. von den Hoff & St. Schmidt (edd.), *Konstruktionen von Wirklichkeit. Bilder im Griechenland des 5. und 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.* (Stuttgart 2001) 137–155; Arnaoutoglou *o.c.* (above n. 420) 91–96. Cf. also R.G. Edmonds III, Extra-ordinary People: Mystai and Magoi, Magicians and Orphics in the Derveni Papyrus, *CPh* 103 (2008) 16–30; E. Eidinow, Patterns of Persecution: 'Witchcraft' Trials in Classical Athens, *P&P* 208 (2010) 9–35.

Striking analogies between Euripides' *Bacchae* and the religious features of the new cults evoke the idea that this tragedy may betray references to a type of religiosity that we descry for the first time in the new cults of the 4th century, but some of which the poet may have perceived in his own time. In *TER UNUS* 131–172 I offered an analysis of the nine most noticeable characteristics of the new god, his priest, the Maenadic retinue, and especially the religious mentality of his followers. They include the following features. The new god is extolled as greater than any other god, and hence claims reverence by all mortals, in Greece and, indeed, throughout the world. His followers magnify his greatness in acclamations and hymns, and revere him while professing their own humility. His major blessing is the happiness shared by anyone who follows him. The one who refuses to worship the invincible god is excessively punished. In the end the onlookers admit their error in not having acknowledged the unique quality of the 'new' god; they repent and praise the god.

Particularly striking are the extravagant praises of the god's unique superiority, the chorus extolling him as 'the foremost of the blessed ones' (377 f.), 'not less than any of the gods' (777), and with the acclamation: δέσποτα δέσποτα (583). The most outrageous of them all, "Dionysos, Dionysos, not Thebes has power over me" (1037/8), is an undisguised proclamation of an escapist and indeed deviational attitude, that cannot but have been shocking in the ears of its Athenian audience.

Altogether the total picture just sketched is unmatched in earlier Greek literature, where one may encounter single elements but never a consistent and coherent complex such as the one of the *Bacchae*.[427]

---

[427] Myths such as those of Tantalos, Sisyphos, are of a quite different nature. R. Osborne, The Ecstasy and the Tragedy: Varieties of Religious Experience in Art, Drama, and Society, in: Pelling 1997, 187–211, espec. 189, first, *in his own words,* makes "a caricature" of the core of my argument and next argues that this caricature should be rejected, a method which in its candidness introduces a novelty in scholarly criticism. Worse, his caricature turns out to be a wilful misrepresentation of my argument. For an answer to Osborne I refer to my 'Heis Dionysos!—One Dionysos? A Polytheistic Perspective, in: R. Schlesier (ed.), *A Different God? Dionysos and Ancient Polytheism* (Berlin forthcoming 2011). For the moment I recommend the well-considered conclusion of another reader concerning the relationship between tragedy and historical reality, Allan, 2004, 148: "Yet the poet's very decision to include such features (viz. the characteristics of contemporaneous religious phenomena HSV) tells us much about their audience's shared religious attitudes." At p. 131 Alan quotes a passage from the tragedy *Semele* by Diogenes of Athens (Athen. 14.636A = *TGF* I 45 F 1.1–6) which shows a 'syncretism' of Dionysos' and Cybele's devotees, very similar

This enhances the probability that the *Bacchae* represents the first reflection of—and *on*—the phenomenon of new cults of 'foreign' gods with their 'sectarian' deviation from routinized forms of religion, deviant above all in their explicit professions of a structural 'adversion'[428] to one unique god. Our evidence grants us not more than scanty glimpses of the creed, myth and ritual of these cults, but in their distinctly henotheistic nature they certainly foreshadowed Hellenistic and later forms of religiosity[429] focussed on a unique and all-powerful god, who was acclaimed with εἷς θεός 'one (is the) god'. The nine characteristics that I traced in the *Bacchae* are all matched in the religious expressions of these later henotheistic cults as I shall sketch in more detail in Chapter III. The fact that the earliest acclamation that

---

to the one in the *Bacchae* of his contemporary Euripides. This means that "Euripides was not alone in combining Dionysac myth and cult with that of the new gods." And cf. below n. 431.

[428] The term was introduced by Nock 1933 to distinguish this type of surrender to henotheistic forms of belief from the (rare) conversion to a monotheistic creed (for which see Chapter III). However, these types of adversion do involve features that William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (London 1902) Chs. 9 and 10, lists as characteristics of conversion: "a passion of willingness, a perception of new truths, a clean and beautiful newness within and without, an ecstasy of happiness, often with hallucinatory sensation."

[429] Mikalson 1998, very much leaning on inscriptional evidence, attempts to demonstrate a high degree of continuity in Athenian religion during the Hellenistic period, a useful (though not surprisingly new) corrective to dominant assumptions, and as such widely welcomed and praised by critics. On the other hand, several critics betray doubts with regard to his tendency, against a general scholarly view, to deny or at least downplay novel religious initiatives in this period. In a discussion of my 'nine features of henotheistic religion' M. correctly notes that in our (epigraphical) sources they do not occur prior to the imperial era (as I explicitly admitted myself). His inference that hence there was practically nothing of the kind in the Hellenistic period necessarily must smooth over the literary evidence of new cults and types of religiosity in the fourth century BC that are at issue here, as well as the remarkable henotheistic traits in the Asklepios cult that we will discuss in the 5th Chapter. Here his restrictions as to place (Athens), time (beginning in the later fourth c.) and privileged type of evidence practically preclude a balanced judgement. Space does not allow a detailed discussion here. I refer to relevant critical notes in (generally positive) reviews such as in *ClAnt* 68 (1999) 459 (private cults); *CW* 93 (1999) 215 (curse tablets); *CR* 50 (2000) 125 (ruler cult). Most thoughtful, explicit and to the point is L. Albinus, in: *Gnomon* 73 (2001) 315–319, who details his theoretical and methodical objections (in a way comparable to that of other critics on M's earlier works) to M.'s approach concluding: "One might be entitled to ask if he is adequately equipped to criticise Versnel's demonstration of changing principles in orientation, based as it is on the interpretation of a literary tradition." To which I would only add one of the many items of helpful methodological advice in Salins 1995, namely to avoid the logical fallacy of converting an absence of evidence into the evidence of an absence.

comprises the word εἷς, namely 'Heis Dionysos',[430] stems from a Bacchic milieu certainly does nothing to discourage the idea that Euripides' *Bacchae* displays henotheistic features. The best I can do is to quote the conclusion of a scholar who more recently launched a meticulous search for references to 'new gods' in Greek tragedy and whose results may reinforce our confidence in the reliability of other literary information:[431]

> In this way the *Bacchae* captures perhaps better than any other document of Greek religion the feelings of fifth-century Greeks as they contemplated these non-Olympian and non epic-deities: such powers are new to *our* polis and its religious and mythological traditions, but their rites are immemorial and demand recognition and respect. This is not to deny the evidence that the new gods were regarded with suspicion by some (or treated as suspicious in order to make a rhetorical point), but at the same time we should beware lest the relative literary and mythical poverty of the new gods leads us to neglect or deny their religious importance.

This is also a perfect conclusion to the present section in general. Let us not neglect or deny the religious importance of those tokens of private religiosity that we have briefly discussed. Revealing one more way of coping with the plurality of Greek theology, they are far more significant than is generally acknowledged.

4. Conclusions

We started our explorations into the question of order versus chaos with three Greek doubts: one concerning the identity of an appearing god, the second with regard to the question of which god should be approached for different needs and occasions, and the third

---

[430] 3d c. BC but no doubt going back to the 4th. See below p. 302.

[431] Allan 2004, 146, concluding: "As H.S. Versnel has shown in his magisterial study of Dionysiac ambiguities, the *Bacchae* reflects contemporary uneasiness concerning new cults and their ecstatic worship." Earlier Bremmer 1994, 91 f. largely accepted my theory. Parker 1996, 198, while referring to "Versnel's striking study of the *Bacchae*" decides that "the questions rests" on the questions whether the ecstatic cults were places of 'sectarian, missionary enthusiasm' and whether "turning to Sabazios or Mother entail in any degree a turning away from other gods." However in an addendum to his p. 192 n. 144 he notes that recent finds of funerary monuments of devotees in the Cybele cult may change the image and entail a more positive judgement. Cf. in the same vein Ch. Segal, *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae. Expanded edtion* (Princeton 1997) 352 f; 359.

concerning the complications involved in divine nomenclature. The aim of these explorations was to provide a first insight into the complexity inherent in a polytheistic system. And although in all three samples Greeks were shown to have searched for tools to cope with the confusing multitude of their gods, at various points in all three they also had to give in.

Divine names and epithets led us *medias in res*. Were gods with the same name but different epithets perceived as different aspects of one god or as different personae? Was Zeus Herkeios Zeus? Were Zeus Basileus and Zeus Meilichios one and the same god or not? Modern opinions appeared to be diametrically opposed. I have argued that both options may be true, but never at the same time. A multiperspective view allowed the Greek to cope with the ambiguity by shifting from one point of view to the other, depending on what the context, focus, discourse or frame of mind required.

Local gods, as most exemplarily represented by the gods worshipped by each *polis* (and its *chora*), together formed a local pantheon, thus generating many local, relatively isolated, pantheons, one differing from the other not only in their composition, but also in that gods with the same name but belonging to different cities were not (necessarily) perceived as being the same gods. The Hera of Samos was another persona than the Hera of Argos. Here place articulates distinctions that we earlier saw expressed by the epithet and the function it referred to. In other words, identity is now defined by elements of place and time. On the other hand, as we next briefly discussed, there is always the pantheon of Hellas, as gloriously represented in the works of Homer and Hesiod and visualized in tragedy. The two systems, local and national, may clash, but rarely do, since listening to or reading Homer or attending a tragedy takes the participants into another world, a world far more distant, sublime and awesome than everyday reality where sacrifices are made and prayers are addressed to the local gods who are 'right here'. Many pantheons, many horizons.

Finally, side by side with the common religion of *polis* or *deme*, we descry moments or periods of personal devotional affection focussed on an 'elect' god in private cult, in votive religion, at centres of pilgrimage, in congregations round new or foreign gods. In all of them the intimacy between men and god might turn the latter into 'my god', even if this was not the terminology used to mould this type of relationship. It was the most radical, but largely hidden, hence undervalued,

form of coping with the confusing reality of polytheism, namely by just (temporarily) ducking out of it.

In Appendix I we shall consider a different way of ordering gods, viz. the construction of grand totals such as 'all the gods' or 'the twelve gods'. In these systems one clearly recognizes an elementary form of creating order. Nonetheless, they were soon put into jeopardy by their frequent union with one or a few individual gods who, being themselves traditional members of the 'twelve' and more obviously of 'all the gods', already formed part of those collectives. Nor are these the only attempts at imposing order on the complicating multiplicity of polytheism. Gods can be ranged in many different ways, which may be mutually incompatible. Some of them, such as mythical grouping, local clustering, or totalizing into *pantes theoi* or *dodeka theoi*, are devices created by the Greeks themselves. About others scholars may disagree. I just mention the two most topical ones. On the one hand there is the classification of gods into the two categories Olympian and chthonian, a distinction on whose authenticity an ongoing debate is raging,[432] and, on the other hand, the distinction between central/

[432] This hallowed distinction associated with the names of Creuzer, K.O. Müller, and Jane Harrison, and still applied as a structural model in Burkert's handbook, is often assimilated with the distinction between Olympian versus Heroic types of sacrifice. R. Schlesier, Olympian versus Chthonian Religion, *SCI* 11 (1991/1992) 38–51 (German version in: R. Schlesier, *Kulte, Mythen und Gelehrte. Anthropologie der Antike seit 1800* [Frankfurt a. M 1994] 21–32), questions its authenticity as an ancient Greek distinction. The cultic differentiation between Olympian and chthonian sacrifice has been put to question by various specialists, to begin with A.D. Nock, The Cult of Heroes, *HTR* 37 (1944) 141–174 (= *Essays* II 575–602), and more recently especially by Ekroth 2002 and 2008, introducing a division between high-intensity and low-intensity rituals (see 2002, 328 f. and 2008, 90 f.). Briefly also Rudhardt 1958, 251 ff.; R.C.T. Parker, art. "chthonian gods" in: *OCD*[3] (1996), 330. A sophisticated plea for the defence in: S. Scullion, Olympian and Chthonian, *ClAnt* 13 (1994) 75–119, and *idem*, Heroic and Chthonian Sacrifice: New Evidence from Selinous, *ZPE* 132 (2000) 163–171. The latter study takes into account the important *lex sacra* from Selinous recently discovered (Jameson *e.a.* 1993) in which the Tritopatores in their impure condition receive sacrifices "as to the heroes," and in pure state "as to the gods." As in some other *leges sacrae* this seems to imply that gods may shift from a chthonic/heroic into an Olympian identity in a sequence of sacrificial celebrations, comparable to the much discussed Herakles of Thasos (Hdt. 2.44.4). This, then, would be an analogy to the shifting between divine identities as discussed in the present chapter. On the notorious question about the double identity of Herakles see recently: A. Verbanck-Piérard, Le double culte d'Héraklès: légende ou réalité? in: A.-F. Laurens (ed.), *Entre hommes et dieux. Le convive, le héros, le prophète* (Paris 1989) 43–64; E.J. Stafford, Héraklès: encore et toujours le problème du *heros-theos, Kernos* 18 (2005) 391–406. On the implications of the Selinous text see also the contributions of A. Henrichs and R.C.T. Parker (and on a different topic: S. Scullion) in: R. Hägg & B. Alroth (edd.),

normal on the one hand and eccentric/eccentral/marginal gods on the other, a classification adopted as the format of the section "Gods orderly and 'disorderly'" in Bremmer 1994, 15–23.[433]

It was impossible to deal with all these classifications in the present book. Generally one may observe that the plague of what I would call 'binary disease' or 'bipolar infection' has been endemic among scholars long before structuralism made its appearance. According to the

---

Greek Sacrificial Ritual, Olympian and Chthonian: Proceedings of the Sixth International Seminar on Ancient Greek Cult, 25–27 April 1997 (Stockholm 2005), with the important review of this book and of Georgoudi 2005 by G. Ekroth in *Kernos* 20 (2007) 387–399. Another light on the Olympian-chthonian dilemma: Chr.A. Faraone, The Collapse of Celestial and Chthonic Realms in a Late Antique "Apollonian Invocation" (*PGM* I 262–347), in: R.S. Boustan & A.Y. Reed (edd.), *Heavenly Realms and Earthly Realities in Late Antique Religions* (Cambridge 2004) 213–232.

[433] If the Olympian-chthonian opposition is a product of Romanticist scholarship, the opposition central-marginal has its roots in more recent anthropological theory, especially the one concerned with initiatory myth and ritual, which, in classical studies, gained ground in the sixties of the last century. I have given my appraisal of this movement in Versnel 1993, 60–74, arguing that the concept of marginality (which I have eagerly used in my own research) may be useful and indeed revealing on condition that it is clearly and cautiously defined. If not, the elasticity of the concept entails fatal arbitrariness (see against the sloppy use of the concept 'initiation' the important and honest reassessment by one of the initiators of initiation studies in the classical field, F. Graf, Initiation: A Concept with a Troubled History, in: Dodd & Faraone 2003, 3–24). Bremmer's attempt to range the gods into the categories central/orderly versus marginal/disorderly (the latter including Poseidon, Demeter, Dionysos, Hermes, Ares, Aphrodite, Hephaestos) suffers from this very drawback and time and again appears to be intrinsically contradictory. This appears nowhere better than in his treatment of the gods' procession on the Sophilos vase, where he declares the gods who go by cart as gods central to "the orderly centre." This is, however, flatly contradicted by the fact that the 'disorderly' Poseidon, Ares, and Aphrodite, too, go by cart. For this reason Sineux 2006, 48, argues that these gods, too, contribute to consolidate the social order. For a truly brilliant and highly revealing, though inevitably far more complex, interpretation of the whole composition with full account of the pictorial tradition and artistic rules (disregarded by B.), I refer to C. Isler-Kerényi, Dionysos im Götterzug bei Sophilos und Kleitias, *Antike Kunst* 40 (1997) 67–81. For a radical rebuttal of the new central-marginal classification see: I. Polinskaya, Lack of Boundaries, Absence of Oppositions: The City-Countryside Continuum of a Greek Pantheon, in: R.M. Rosen & I. Sluiter (edd.), *City, Countryside, and the Spatial Organization of Value in Classical Antiquity* (Leiden 2006) 61–92. Gods may be 'marginal' in some contexts, while being central in others. This is pre-eminently true for Demeter, a central goddess in Sicilian cities, but no less for the 'marginal' god Poseidon: J. Mylonopoulos, *Heiligtümer und Kulte des Poseidon auf der Peloponnes* (Suppl. Kernos 13, Liège 2003) is one ongoing testimony that "eine Verbindung Poseidons mit dem Chaos (J.N. Bremmer) als unhaltbar gelten darf" (p. 437). Cf. also G. Pironti's review of the Italian translation of B.'s book in *Kernos* 19 (2006) 460 ff., with critical remarks concerning both initiation and marginal/central. In sum then, to take an expression by Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (Harmondsworth 1970 = London 1966), 121, metaphorically: "All margins are dangerous."

novelist Tom Robbins all human beings may be divided into just two classes: those who think that everything can be divided into just two classes, and those who don't."[434] In the rest of this book I will continue my demonstration that the modern paradigmatic pressure manifest in this either-or approach has dangerously affected both the presentation and the solution of questions.

In sum, there is no unity, there are *unities*, creating at a different level a new diversity, even a new type of 'potential chaos', that of the multiplicity of classifications, one challenging the other and unpleasantly disconcerting the modern observer. Is Greek polytheism kosmos or chaos? By now my answer will not come as a surprise. One conclusion that has become obvious is that the different local pantheons represent multiple frames of reference, contexts and perspectives, each of them serving to help create order in an otherwise confusing diversity. Endless ramification is just a reflex of the nature of polytheism.

This has serious consequences for the description (French 'signalement') of each individual god. Demeter has been branded an Olympian, a chthonian, a women's goddess, an agrarian fertility goddess, a city goddess, a marginal goddess, a goddess of the curse, a representative of divine justice. Now Demeter may be all this but never all at once. One god—as identified by one name—always participates in a variety of systems. In accordance with each system the god will show a different face. Sometimes literally: "Our Demeter is black" say the Arcadians, who worship a chthonian black Demeter who is the spouse of Poseidon. They cannot read—or listen to—the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, the Olympian goddess who has a daughter by Zeus, without adjusting both the goddess's colour and her family relationship to this more radiant milieu.

---

[434] As quoted by J.Z. Smith, Trading Places, in: M. Meyer & P. Mirecki (edd.), *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (Leiden etc. 1995) 13. Cf. T.L. Scheffer, The Ideology of Binary Opposition. Subject/Object Duality and Anthropology, *Dialectical Anthropology* 6 (1981) 165–169. S.R. Barrett, *The Rebirth of Anthropological Theory* (Toronto-London 1984) 150, writes on the opposition between his own 'anthropological' picture and that of Lévi-Strauss: "That picture will not resemble the neat and tidy systems of opposition characteristic of Lévi Straussian structuralism. Instead the emphasis will be on a world of 'cluttered contradictions', themselves at times messy, loosely integrated, ambiguously located, and devoid of ultimate rational design. If this view makes the philosophical hair of French rationalism stand on end and drives logicians zany, the only solace to be offered is that *it moves us closer to the actual character of life itself*" (my italics). To move closer to actual life itself is precisely one of the objectives of the present book.

A local god can possess a very complete palette of different functions, may boast an all-round versatile nature, while the same god—but now I must correct myself: the god with the same name when viewed as a participant in the national pantheon—may be restricted to a more specialized individual domain, characterized by specific qualities and properties. Many great (as well as minor) gods are invoked for a great variety of wishes and needs. This is, first, because in cult their (alleged) specific domain is far less strictly maintained than myth may suggest, secondly, because functional specialism is not the only 'signifier' or 'definer' of a god, who is at least as much defined by his topological/spatial or political position in village or *polis*, and, last but not least, because different believers, even if belonging to one community, may have a very particular personal relationship with and very different conceptions of one and the same god.

All this should make us beware of making generalizing, dogmatic and monolithic pronouncements not only with respect to one god, but also regarding a polytheistic pantheon. Fortunately this insight has been steadily gaining ground during the latter two decades. Earlier in this chapter I have lauded John Mikalson and Madeleine Jost. Throughout this book we will encounter different recent approaches to the multifariousness of sometimes incongruous yet not mutually exclusive patterns of thought in one culture. For Roman religion I would single out Denis Feeney, who argues that any attempt to make absolute classifications in ancient polytheism

> proceeds as if a society does have an immanent collective system of cognition underpinning its religion; yet such an approach does not do justice to the competitive variety of knowledge systems in any society, and ends up confusing the patterns constructed by the outsider with the actual thought of the participants[435]

One of these systems—not the least important—is the symbolic grammar of meaning as brilliantly reconstructed or constructed—everyone will make his choice of expression here—by the École de Paris. But as we have seen there are more, many more than I could show in the available space.

---

[435] Feeney 1998, 140. He follows here Bloch 1989, 106–136; 152–165, in his criticism of traditional cultural anthropology. We will come back to his ideas in other chapters, most particularly in Chapter VI. See for the moment the multidisciplinary literature on 'finite provinces of meaning' above (n. 226).

This means neither that one category makes havoc of the others or more generally of divine structures, nor that the different registers are completely isolated systems. One may inform others, as I hope to show in the fourth chapter. We should not underrate the enormous impact of the one element that connects them all: the name. It is only due to this lowest common denominator that one can say "our Demeter is not the same as theirs." As long as we (and the Greeks) think only in one register, we may find a relatively orderly and neat little kosmos. As soon as we try to cross the borders between different registers, the threat of inconsistency, confusion, and conflict looms large. My suggestion is to follow the Greeks in *not* doing that, or if you must—for instance when you suffer from the regrettable ambition to write a textbook—consistently to avoid generalizing statements (which would, as I well realize, make it a particularly unreadable textbook, unanimously advised against for use by undergraduates). If you have just heard that the Hagios Georgios from right here is not the same as the one in Cappadocia, you are not supposed to ask: and how about the dragon? Did your local Georgios kill the beast or didn't he? By doing so you would wilfully break the dividing lines and mix up categories, thus creating chaos. It is also breaking the rules of the game. So do not ask an ancient Greek how the Apollo Aguieus at his doorstep—very much Apollo, to be sure, but a legless one—could have recovered the cattle that the Herm in his garden—very much Hermes, but an armless one—had stolen, as it is told in the Homeric Hymn to Hermes. Because then you are mixing up different registers which makes you the one who is creating chaos, not your Greeks.

As for the Greeks: they share the common human tendency to prevent multiple registers from clashing. They may do so by a virtuoso winking process, well-known from (socio-)psychological reactions to cognitive dissonance or by means of other culturally ingrained strategies that control perception. Long before the word narratology even existed, every reader (listener) was unconsciously aware that you must not give free rein to everything you know while reading or listening to a story. The narrator focalizes, the reader should adapt, it is part of the game. While one aspect is dominant, others lose their relevance and become part of the background noise. It is all a matter of focus, of perception, of marked or unmarked positions. Evoking an undesired aspect at the wrong moment spoils the story and renders the message a mess: chaos. The good reader or perceiver applies the correct category

while closing off the undesired one. It is this principle that will be of great help throughout this book and most of all in our final chapter.

If, thus, we may now grant Burkert that a *potential* chaos is always lurking in the intercosmic space between different classifications, we should first realize that this is a risk that Greeks share with any other culture, as Mary Douglas taught us. What *is* order? A satisfactory consistent system of classifications. What is chaos? Lack of this. What is the overlapping and clashing of different classifications *and coping with it?* Culture. Hence, secondly, the really interesting issue is not that there *is* a potential chaos, but how different cultures coped with it.

Greeks (that is: some Greeks) pushed frontiers in their quest for consistency, coherence, unity, rationality, order. *The* Greeks never lost an awareness of living in a dissonant, pluralistic, diverse reality. One specific feature of Greek culture, as opposed to our modern culture, is that it displays an unmatched capacity to unashamedly juxtapose the two, tolerating glaring contradictions and flashing alternations. It is this deeply dissonant yet unifying principle that this book will be about, as we will continue now to demonstrate in our second chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

THE GODS
DIVINE JUSTICE OR DIVINE ARBITRARINESS?

> When the poet represents men with contrasting characters he is often obliged to contradict himself, and he doesn't know which of the two opposing speeches contains the truth.
>
> Plato *Leg.* 4.719c

> The person seeking a logical explanation in every case destroys the sense of wonder in everything. For when the logical explanation of something escapes us, that is when uncertainty begins, and thus philosophy.
>
> Plutarch *Quaestiones convivales* 5.7.1 (680C)

1. Introduction[1]

1. *Controversial diction in archaic poetry*

> For now it is a race of iron; and people of that race will never cease from toil and misery by day or night, in constant distress, and the

[1] This chapter has a long prehistory. It grew out of a series of lectures for my Leiden students in the eighties of the last century, which formed the basis for a paper I gave at the Bristol symposium "From Myth to Logos?" of 1996, published by Richard Buxton as *From Myth to Reason? Studies in the Development of Greek Thought* (Oxford 1999). I reserved my own paper for my Sather Lectures, retaining the central argument and the discussion of the Herodotean and Solonic texts largely as they were at the time. At Bristol my paper was duly torn to pieces by the philologists, literary critics and structuralists who constituted an absolute majority among the attendant Hellenists, and as such a particularly inauspicious blend under the circumstances, as the reader of the present chapter will soon understand. Comfort, however, was forthcoming from the warm sympathy for my argument expressed (*after* the session *and* the ensuing discussion) by John Gould, whose works on relevant Herodotean issues I had lauded, and Christopher Rowe, whose very relevant article on Hesiod (Rowe 1983) had escaped me. *And* from Thomas Harrison, who told me that he had just finished an article and was writing a dissertation on the same and related themes in Herodotus, and who sent me both the article (Harrison 1997) and his book (Harrison 2000). The latter comprises a lengthy and exemplary synopsis of the encounter between Solon and Croesus (pp. 33–44) and Polykrates (45–47), written independently but very much like mine albeit with a considerably greater amount of detail and elegance. Since my own argument,

> gods will give them harsh troubles (χαλεπὰς δὲ θεοὶ δώσουσι μερίμνας).[2]

This impression of the *condition humaine* in the fifth age of the world, the era of its author according to his own definition, represents the pessimistic perception of Hesiod *Op.* 176 ff. (late 8th c.). Comparably, in *Op.* 100 ff. the dire consequences of Pandora's opening of the jar in accordance with Zeus' vindictive design, are pictured as follows:[3]

> Sicknesses visit men by day, and others by night, uninvited, bringing ill to mortals, silently (….). Thus there is no way to evade the purpose of Zeus.

Other poets of the archaic period, from the 8th into the 5th c., endorse this pessimistic view in a varicolored palette of words and tones. "There is no man whom Zeus does not give a multitude of ills," sighs Mimnermos (*circa* 600 BC) fr. 2, in the finale of a poem that opens with praises of "our youth's bloom" but quickly switches over to a list of all the sufferings that old age brings.[4] In the same vein, the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (7th c.) 189–193 describes how:

> the Muses hymn the unending gifts the gods enjoy and the sufferings of men, all that they endure at the hands of the deathless gods, and how they live witless and helpless and cannot find healing for death or defence against old age.

---

which leans on texts of Homer, archaic Lyric poetry, Herodotus and Solon's *Hymn to the Muses*, cannot do without any of them, I have decided to maintain this chapter roughly as it was in 1996, though considerably revised and very much expanded *inter alia* with references to the works of the kindred souls just mentioned.

[2] Unless indicated otherwise all Greek texts and translations are those of West's editions of Hesiod and the Lyric poets: M.L. West, *Hesiod. Theogony* (Oxford 1966); *Hesiod. Works and Days* (Oxford 1978); *Iambi et Elegi Graeci* I (Oxford 1989²), II (Oxford 1992²); *Hesiod. Theogony and Works and Days. A New Translation* (Oxford 1988); *Greek Lyric Poetry. A New Translation* (Oxford 1994).

[3] The two mythical excursions (i.e. the myth of the five ages or races and that of Pandora) offer "an overlapping, quite complex and ultimately rather subtle picture of the Fall of Man from a condition of divine privilege and sodality to his present one of misery, disease, family trouble and old age" (G. Kirk, *The Nature of Greek Myths* [Harmondsworth 1974] 142). Doubts on the Hesiodic authenticity in: I. Musäus, *Der Pandoramythos bei Hesiod und seine Rezeption bis Erasmus von Rotterdam* (Göttingen 2004).

[4] See: M. Griffith, Man and the Leaves. A Study of Mimnermus fr. 2, *CSCA* 8 (1975) 73–80.

Various poems of this period open with a reference to the arbitrariness of the reign of Zeus or the gods as for instance a poetic letter to a young friend by Semonides (*circa* 600 BC) fr. 1: "Loud-thundering Zeus controls the outcome, lad, in everything, and makes it how he wants." After a long list of all kinds of disillusions and disasters which men, living by the day (*ephemerioi*),[5] suffer in their lifetime, he thus summarizes the results of Zeus' interventions: "So we are spared no ill, but numberless dangers and hurts for which we cannot plan exist for mortals." In a more implicit fashion Simonides (late 6th–early 5th c.) 527 says: "There is no ill that men should not expect; in a short space of time God reshuffles everything" (πάντα μεταρρίπτει θεός). Even though, apparently, the gods are capable of 'reshuffling' the human situation *in bonam* or *in malam partem*, the emphasis is on the shift from good to bad fortune, as it is, for instance, in Archilochos (7th c.) fr. 130. Here, too, in the end it is only the negative pole of divine arbitrariness that receives specification:[6]

> It all depends upon the gods.[7] Often enough, when men
> are prostrate on the ground with woe, they set them up again;
> and often enough, when men are standing proud and all seems bright,
> they tip them over on their backs, and then they're in a plight—
> a man goes wandering, short of bread, out of his mind with fright.

"As flies to wanton boys, are we to gods; they kill us for their sport": the famed Shakespearian lines seem to mirror this side of archaic Greek view of life. Misery, illness, troubles, they are all gifts of the gods and of Zeus in particular, whose motives are inscrutable and seem to be arbitrary. The unpredictability of the supreme god did not fail to provoke feelings of bewilderment and indignation in authors of the archaic period. They culminate in a few famous, near-biblical[8] complaints

---

[5] On the semantics of this term also in other poets of this time: H. Fränkel, Man's 'Ephemeros' Nature according to Pindar and Others, *TAPhA* 77 (1946) 131–145, translated as 'ΕΦΗΜΕΡΟΣ als Kennwort für die menschliche Natur', in *idem* 1955, 23–39. Cf. *idem* 1973, 133 ff.; 530, Index A, 5.5–1. A critical view: M.W. Dickie, On the Meaning of *ephêmeros*, *ICS* 1 (1975) 7–14.

[6] As is rightly emphasized by H.-P. Müller, Psalmen und frühgriechische Lyrik. Drei Beispiele, *BZ* 47 (2003) 23–42, espec. 36–39, who compares it with Psalm 113, whose social motivation, however, provides a more hopeful perspective.

[7] The text here is corrupt, but there can be no doubt about the general tenor. I follow West's translation. Cf. West 1974, 131 f.

[8] The resemblance with certain psalms and other near Eastern texts has been widely acknowledged. See: West 1997, 515 ff. The so-called *Theodicy*, a Babylonian text of c. 1000 BC. (W.G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* [Oxford 1975] 63–91)

about the enigmatic ways of Zeus' justice by Theognis (second half 6th c.)[9] 373–382, sometimes referred to as 'prayers of contestation':[10]

> Dear Zeus, I 'm quite surprised at you. You're king of all,
> the power and the glory's yours alone;
> you understand the heart and mind of every man,
> and yours, Lord, is the highest majesty.
> So how, Zeus, can you bring yourself to treat alike
> wrongdoers and the law-abiding man,
> whether we are disposed to sensible restraint
> or give way to unrighteousness and crime?
> Are there no guidelines set by heaven for mortal men,
> no path to follow that will please the gods?

Elsewhere, in a closely similar protest against the inconsistencies in the divine treatment of virtuous and evil mortals (743–746), being part of an argument against the belief that descendants will pay for the errors of their ancestors,[11] the poet complains:

---

bristles with closely similar expressions, e.g. "Those who neglect the god go the way of prosperity, while those who pray to the goddess are impoverished and dispossessed." See e.g. K.l. Seybold & J. von Ungern Sternberg, Amos und Hesiod. Aspekte eines Vergleichs, in: K. Raaflaub (ed.), *Anfänge politischen Denkens in der Antike. Die nahöstlichen Kulturen und die Griechen* (Munich 1993) 115–139, who, in this respect, speak of "die ostmediterrane Koine des 8. Jahrhunderts v. Chr."

[9] By Theognis I mean the corpus of Theognidea. I cannot go into questions of authenticity or chronology here, but I am happy to rely on the expert judgment of M.L. West in *OCD* s.v.: "The collection may be taken as a representative cross-section of the elegiac poetry circulating in social settings between the late 7th and early 5th cent. and it is our best source for the ordinary man's ideas about life, friendship, fate, death and other matters." For the function of the name Theognis as a 'seal': A.L. Ford, The Seal of Theognis: The Politics of Authorship in Archaic Greece, in: T.H.J. Figueira & G. Nagy (edd.), *Theognis of Megara: Poetry and the Polis* (Baltimore 1985) 82–95. On the collection: F. Ferrari, Sulla ricezione dell'elegia arcaica nella silloge teognidea. Il problema delle varianti, *Maia* 39 (1987) 177–197; H. Friis Johansen, A Poem by Theognis 3. The Collection of the Corpus, *C&M* 47 (1996) 9–23; E.L. Bowie, The Theognidea: A Step towards a Collection of Fragments?, in: G.W. Most (ed.), *Collecting Fragments—Fragmenta Sammeln* (Göttingen 1997) 53–66. Cf., most recently, the very thorough study by H. Selle, *Theognis und die Theognidea* (Berlin-New York 2008). Scholars generally agree that the prayers of protest quoted in my text belong to the *ipsissima verba* of the poet.

[10] J. Labarbe, La prière 'contestataire' dans la poésie grecque, in: H. Limet & J. Ries (edd.), *L'expérience de la prière dans les grandes religions. Actes du colloque de Louvain-la Neuve 1978* (Louvain-la Neuve 1980) 137–148; A. Garzya, La divinité et l'homme chez Théognis, *REG* 102 (1989) 284–294, espec. 291 f.; Pulleyn 1997, 196–203.

[11] Sewell-Rutter 2007, albeit with a focus on tragedy, has much to say about the concept of inherited guilt in general. Cf. Parker 1997, 153 f. on the contrast between tragedy and oratory in their appreciation of this theme; Pownall 1998 shows how Xenophon distances himself from the 'sins of the fathers motif'. The same idea

> Again, how is it fair, lord of the deathless gods, that someone who keeps out of wrongfulness, guilty of no transgression and no perjury, a righteous man, suffers unrighteously?

All this is only a very small selection of the utterances that have prompted the label 'archaic pessimism' for the mentality that manifests itself in the Greek literature of this early period.

However, there is another side. In the same work from which we quoted a pessimistic passage, Hesiod never stops reminding us that (*Op.* 238 f. and 280–283):

> Those who occupy themselves with violence (ὕβρις) and wickedness and brutal deeds (σχέτλια ἔργα), Kronos' son, wide-seeing Zeus, marks out retribution (δίκην). For if a man is willing to say what he knows to be just, to him wide-seeing Zeus gives prosperity; but whoever deliberately lies in his sworn testimony, therein, by injuring Right, he is blighted past healing.

These two assertions are part of an extended argument replete with warnings against moral misconduct and its consequences, with special reference to the misconduct of the author's wicked brother Perses and the crooked judgments of 'gift-eating kings'. The numerous references to *dike* and divine retribution in this long section of the *Erga*[12] culminate in the passages just cited in which the divine justice of all-seeing Zeus is celebrated.[13]

And again other poets agree. In his version of the fable of the eagle and the vixen, Archilochos fr. 177, relates how the fox, treacherously

---

(including the aversion it provoked) prevailed in Israel. See: J.P. Brown, *Israel and Hellas* (*ZAW* Beihefte 231, Berlin-New York 1995) 310 f.

[12] See: H. Erbse, Die Funktion des Rechtsgedankens in Hesiods 'Erga', *Hermes* 121 (1993) 12–28. E.F. Beal, Hesiod's Treatise on Justice: *Works and Days* 109–380, *CJ* 101 (2005/6) 161–182, argues that the middle portion of Hesiod's poem is a coherent essay on the concept of *dike*. Generally on Hesiod and justice: M. Gagarin, The Poetry of Justice: Hesiod and the Origins of Greek Law, *Ramus* 21 (1992) 61–78. J.-U. Schmidt, Die Aufrichtung des Zeusherrschaft als Modell—Überlegungen zur Theogonie des Hesiod I, *WJ* 14 (1988) 39–70; II *WJ* 15 (1989) 17–38, sketches the *Theogony* as a gradual evolution from the brutal and violent regime of Kronos to the development of a regime of order and justice under king Zeus, as does J. Strauss Clay, *Hesiod's Cosmos* (Cambridge 2003).

[13] West *ad loc.* (267) gives the necessary information. This justice of Zeus, incidentally, may follow strange paths. In the lines following v. 239 (above) we are informed that the retribution for the violations of one culprit often strikes his whole community with famine, plague and miscarriages. The army may be destroyed, the ships may go down. This brings to mind the theme of suffering as a ransom for the crimes of an ancestor, as we saw in Theognis and as we shall see later in this chapter.

bereft of his progeny by his trusted neighbour the eagle, invokes Zeus with the prayer to avenge him (successfully, if we may surmise that the lacking end of the story concurs with the fable as we have it in Aesopos):[14]

> O Father Zeus, thine is the power in heaven,
> and thou dost oversee
> men's deeds, the wicked and the lawful; all creatures' rights
> and wrongs are thy concern.[15]
> (ὦ Ζεῦ, πάτερ Ζεῦ, σὸν μὲν οὐρανοῦ κράτος,
> σὺ δ' ἔργ' ἐπ' ἀνθρώπων ὁρᾶις
> λεωργὰ καὶ θεμιστά, σοὶ δὲ θηρίων
> ὕβρις τε καὶ δίκη μέλει)

Compare Thgn. 143 f. (one out of many in the corpus):

> No man has ever cheated guest or suppliant, Cyrnus, without the immortals taking note.

Here, then, we see no desperate—protesting or resigned—surrender to a concept of arbitrary and capricious divine action, but clear tokens of a belief that divine action, however opaque its mechanisms, in the last resort is steered by principles of justice and retribution. An optimistic stance as opposed to the pessimistic one with which this chapter opened.

Corollary to this conception is the idea that man ought not to blame the gods for his own misfortune. The human inclination to attribute one's own misfortune to the will of the gods or of Zeus and thus disclaim guilt, though not necessarily accountability, being ubiquitous in Homer,[16] is censured in the famous 'first attempt at a theodicy'[17] by Zeus himself, right in the beginning of the Odyssey 1.32–34:

---

[14] West 1974, 133; *idem*, Archilochus' Fox and Eagle: More Echoes in Later Poetry, *ZPE* 45 (1982) 30 ff., with earlier literature.

[15] On the remarkable parallels of this poem in Near Eastern literature see: West 1997, 504 ff. Likewise in fr. 197 Archilochos addresses Zeus as the protector of *dike* with a complaint about the misbehaviour of Lykambes.

[16] See the evidence in: A. Heubeck *e.a., A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* I (Oxford 1988) *ad loc.* p. 77, and below pp. 164–171.

[17] W. Nestle, *Vom Mythos zum Logos* (Stuttgart 1975 = 1941) 24, called this the "älteste Versuch einer Theodizee." So already: W. Jaeger, *Paideia. Die Formung der griechischen Menschen* (Berlin – Leipzig 1934, many reprints) 86: "Diese Theodizee schwebt über dem ganzen Gedicht." Cf. W. Jaeger, Solons Eunomie, *Sitz. Ber. phil.-hist. Kl. Berlin* (1926) = *Scripta Minora* (Rome 1960) 315–337. Cf. Dodds 1951, 32; Lloyd-Jones 1983, 28–36; M. Stahl, Solon F. 3D. Die Geburtsstunde des demokratischen Gedankens, *Gymnasium* 99 (1992) 385–408. S. Lanzi, *Theos Anaitios. Storia della*

> It is astonishing how ready mortals are to blame the gods. It is from us they say that evils come. But they themselves, by their reckless stupidity, have sufferings beyond their fated share.

And it returns in the Theognidean corpus e.g. 833–836:

> It's all gone to the dogs, to ruin, and we can't blame any of the immortal blessed gods, Cyrnus. It's human violence, craft, and insolence (ὕβρις) that have cast us from success to misery.

In a more philosophic vein, we find the same in the pre-socratic philosopher Demokritos (D-K, B 175):

> The gods give to humans all good things, in olden days as well as now. But not the bad and harmful and useless things; these are not given by the gods, but men call them down upon themselves due to their blindness and want of sense.[18]

Both optimistic and pessimistic viewpoints share one more general idea concerning divine power. In contradistinction to more ambivalent assessments of the capacities of individual gods (as we shall discuss in Ch. V), the omnipotence of 'the gods' or 'Zeus' is not subject to doubt or debate in archaic literature. References to the gods' absolute power abound, characteristically often phrased as their arbitrary capacity to act according to their whims, freely and in contrary ways. We have seen one exemplary formulation of arbitrary omnipotence in the fragment of Archilochos fr. 130 quoted above. It strongly resembles the well-known aretalogy on Zeus that opens Hesiod's *Erga*, which we shall discuss at the end of this chapter, a hymnic prayer that opens with six lines evoking arbitrary omnipotence and proceeds with an appeal to the god's capacity to do justice.[19] Brief, often proverbial, assertions of divine arbitrary omnipotence abound:

---

teodicea da Omero ad Agostino (Rome 2000) 39–42, treats the concept of 'theodicy' throughout antiquity, with pp. 37–63 on the archaic Greek period.

[18] In Ch. V p. 397. we will come across a strikingly similar attempt in Stoic theology to tackle the problem of theodicy that is already intimated here.

[19] Strong similarity also in Pind. *Pyth*. 2.49–52, most probably an intertextual reference to Archilochos, who is the explicit target in the lines immediately following. See: Ch. G. Brown, Pindar on Archilochos and the Gluttony of Blame (*Pyth.* 2.52–56), *JHS* 126 (2006) 36–46.

> Hom. *Od.* 16.211 f.:
> Easy is it for the gods, who live in heaven, either to bestow honour on a mortal being or to bring him down (ῥηίδιον δὲ θεοῖσι, τοὶ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν, / ἠμὲν κυδῆναι θνητὸν βροτὸν ἠδὲ κακῶσαι).
>
> Hom. *Od.* 6.188 f.
> Olympian Zeus himself dispends happiness to men, both good and bad ones, to each of them according to his will (Ζεὺς δ'αὐτὸς νέμει ὄλβον Ὀλύμπιος ἀνθρώποισιν, / ἐσθλοῖς ἠδὲ κακοῖσιν, ὅπως ἐθέλῃσι ἑκάστῳ).
>
> Thgn. 157 f.:
> Zeus tilts the balance now to this side, now to that: now to be rich, now to be penniless.
>
> Pind. *Isthm.* 5.52:
> Zeus dispenses this and dispenses that, Zeus who is Master of all (Ζεὺς τά τε καὶ τὰ νέμει, Ζεὺς ὁ πάντων κύριος).

The idea is as old as Hom. *Il.* 24.527 ff.,[20] the famous image of the two jars (*pithoi*) of Zeus, one with good, the other with evil things, from which he assigns the mortals either mixed, or solely evil things. Here, as in some examples above, his arbitrary regime verges towards the negative.

The mortal's only refuge in this situation of *amêchaniê* (helplessness, resourcelessness), as Semonides calls it,[21] lies in endurance, which often manifests itself as the comforting insight that every mortal gets his turn in misfortune. Therefore the human sufferer is advised to comply with this *rhythmos*.[22] If, then, we do discern a global agree-

---

[20] But how old is that? Both conceptually and linguistically the passage is quite untypical of Homer. See: Richardson, comm. *ad loc*. On good and ill fortune as gifts of the gods: Fränkel 1973, 534, Index A. 5.8–3.

[21] On the notion: Dodds 1951, 29 f. On the wide range of de/connotations of this term in various authors see: R.P. Martin, *Healing, Sacrifice, and Battle: Amechania and Related Concepts in Early Greek Poetry* (Innsbruck 1983); G.F. Held, Archilochos' Ἀμαχανία. Pindar *Pythian* 2.52–56 and *Isthmian* 4. 1–3, *Eranos* 101 (2003) 30–48. On the connection between *amêchania* and *agnosia* (lack of knowledge/insight) in archaic literature: S. Foellinger, Die Funktion von Nicht-Wissen in der frühgriechischen Literatur, in: J. Althoff (ed.), *Philosophie und Dichtung im antiken Griechenland. Akten der 7. Tagung der Karl und Gertrud Abel-Stiftung 2002* (Stuttgart 2007) 53–65.

[22] This notion, coming close to "E 'n la sua volontade è nostra pace" (Dante, *Paradiso* III, 85), glimmers through in Archil. fr. 13, 5 ff.: "But then, my friends, the gods for ills past healing have set endurance (τλημοσύνη) as the antidote. This woe is different men's at different times (ἄλλοτέ τ ἄλλος ἔχει τάδε); now it has come our way, and we bemoan our bleeding wound; another day 't will pass to others. Come then,

ment on commendable forms of human reaction to misfortune, there is, as we just saw, no consensus whatsoever with regard to the possible *grounds* for the gods' (negative) interventions. Are they inspired by arbitrary and capricious impulses as we may summarize it once more in the words of Thgn. 133 ff.

> No one's responsible for his own gain or loss; it is the gods that give us both. (….) We mortals have no knowledge, only vain belief; the gods fix everything according to their will.

Or is divine interference in the end inspired by principles of justice and retribution as Hesiod keeps hoping, as in *Op*. 706. "Beware the punishment of the immortal blessed ones"?

Not only do we find the two contrasting options dispersed throughout the literary testimonies of the archaic period, we also detect them in the works of (or ascribed to) one and the same author.[23] As far as our evidence allows us to judge, no archaic author displays a coherent and consistent monolithic worldview in his way of coping with the stupendous and enigmatic events in human life.[24] The corresponding

---

everyone endure (……) spend no more time in womanish lament." They are common in archaic poetry. For 'endurance' e.g. Thgn. 591: "One must endure whatever the gods give mortal men" (Τολμᾶν χρή, τὰ διδοῦσι θεοὶ θνητοῖσι βροτοῖσιν) cf. 445 f.; 555 f.; *H. Dem.* 147 f.: "What the gods send us (θεῶν δῶρα) we mortals bear perforce, although we suffer (ἀχνύμενοί περ ἀνάγκῃ τέτλαμεν ἄνθρωποι), for they are much stronger than we." Cf. 216 f.; Pind. *Pyth.* 3.82. On the notion: Fränkel 1973, 87 f.; 530, Index A 5.5–2. For the '*allote allos*' idea see: Krause 1976. The term *rhusmos* seems to be an Archilochean invention, as in fr. 128, 5–7: "In your rejoicing let your joy, in hardship your despairs be tempered: understand the *rhusmos* shaping men's affairs (γίνωσκε δ' οἷος ῥυσμὸς ἀνθρώπους ἔχει)." The image of life's *Werdegang* as a circle or wheel with its ups and downs (κύκλος) is closely related. Cf. below n. 78.

[23] That one must always allow for differences in context will be the main thesis of the present chapter as it is of the whole book. A recommendable exercise is to peruse Hom. *Od.* 14, a book that bristles with references to Zeus (both in personal and in generic form), the gods, some god, god, as well as all the gods and an individual god (ll. 39, 53, 57, 61 f., 65, 74, 82 f., 119, 150, 175, 183, 198, 227, 235, 242, 246, 268, 300, 309, 348, 357, 366, 391, plus the sacrificial scene, on which see: Ch. IV pp. 367–370), and try to determine their specific functions in their various contexts and discourses. It is also true that there are individual differences in emphasis, expression and imagery typical of different archaic authors, one rather stressing the element of the divine retribution, another underlining the arbitrariness of fate.

[24] See for an instructive survey of the very divergent explanations of disaster and the moral aspects of just recompensation: K. Alt, Die Dichter und das Böse, in: ΣΦΑΙΡΟΣ. *Festschrift H. Schwabe*, *WS* 107–108 (1994–5) 109–155. For instance at p. 154, concerning attempts to justify the inscrutable ways of the gods: "wo sie (this type of explanation) aber als dominante Interpretation versucht wird, von der Odyssee bis zu Euripides, erweist sie sich als schwierig, in der Regel als nicht Konsequent

lack of clarity and consistency in the religious views of these authors has left deep marks in the scholarly discussion of the second half of the twentieth century.

2. *Modern Voices*

The issue under discussion, with a focus on the relationship between divine justice and human responsibility, has been the central concern in the Sather lectures of no fewer than three outstanding scholars: Eric Dodds (1951), Hugh Lloyd-Jones (1971) and Bernard Williams (1993). The first two scholars took diametrically opposed positions. Dodds denied the Homeric epic "the tendency to transform the supernatural in general, and Zeus in particular, into an agent of justice,"[25] and traced a gradual development in the 'education of Zeus' with a hesitating beginning in the *Odyssey* and gradually increasing from Hesiod onwards. In the view of Lloyd-Jones, on the other hand, the justice of Zeus can be fully attested as early as the *Iliad*: "according to the terms of Zeus' justice (.....) both Agamemnon and Achilleus receive rough justice for their injustice to each other."[26] Moreover, his book is one unabashed attempt to save Greek divine ethics from the inconsistencies and ambiguities that force themselves on the reader of passages such as those presented in the first section of the present chapter.[27]

---

durchführbar oder unzulänglich, wenn nicht gar, wie nich selten bei Euripides, als absurd." Cf. also below n. 110.

[25] Dodds 1951, 31, where one also finds some exceptions, while at p. 32, he finds "no indication in the narrative of the Iliad that Zeus is concerned with justice as such." The sole notorious exception is 16.384 f., where Zeus is pictured punishing those "who by violence pronounce in the market-place crooked judgments and drive out justice, having no care for the concern of the gods." This, however, is so unique and dissimilar from any other Iliadic expression that it is often taken as Hesiodic rather than Homeric in character (so also Dodds 52 n. 16), sometimes also as a later interpolation. It is perhaps less difficult to agree with this verdict since recent scholarship is reshuffling the chronological relationship between *Iliad, Odyssey* and Hesiod's work. But at this point I still find it hard to disagree with Janko 1982.

[26] Lloyd-Jones 1971, 21 and 27.

[27] In this and other respects he was preceded by Festugière 1952, 26–36, who discussed the same problem and, rather sweepingly, wrote (27): "Since Homer and Hesiod there is an unshakable confidence in the justice of Zeus. God is no longer God if he does not join the attribute of justice to that of omnipotence." I cannot go into the relevant critical reactions on Lloyd-Jones' book and, more especially, on the intimations of special pleading in it. The core problem is that justice is not an unequivocal concept. The most vulnerable point, as many critics have not failed to note, is the solution he proposes. He *inter alia* defines divine justice as "the divinely appointed order of the universe," an order that is not always, not even usually, open to human scrutiny

After reading Lloyd-Jones' *Justice of Zeus*, Dodds generously wrote to its author: "I stressed the element of change in Greek beliefs, you stress the element of continuity; we are both of us right, though both of us

---

and hence can prevail without its author being just. Despite its precariousness—if not arbitrariness—this is a rationale often resorted to in recent scholarship. For instance by S. Nelson, The Justice of Zeus in Hesiod's Fable of the Hawk and Nightingale, *ClJ* 92 (1997) 235–247, espec. 247: "Hesiod's Zeus is just, but his power is not dependent upon his justice. Rather it is justice that is dependent upon the invincible power of Zeus." I am not absolutely certain that I understand what this means. Nor do I sympathize with the desperate squirming in search of an intrinsic logic in Hesiod's fable, as for instance by J. Dalfen, Die ὕβρις der Nachtigall. Zu den Fabel bei Hesiod (*Erga* 202–218) und zur griechischen Fabel im allgemeinen, *WS* 107–108 (1994–1995) 157–177 (= G. Petersmann [ed.], J. Dalfen, *Kleine Schriften* [Salzburg 2001] 1–18), and in the same year Th.K. Hubbard, Hesiod's Fable of the Hawk and the Nightingale Reconsidered, *GRBS* 36 (1995) 161–171, both suggesting that the nightingale is the one which has become hybristic by involving with—or challenging—the more powerful and who is rightly punished for that. All this without even the faintest allusion by the author himself. In the same vein and equally sophisticated: W. Allan, Divine Justice and Cosmic Order in early Greek Epic, *JHS* 126 (2006) 1–35. St. White, Io's World: Intimations of Theodicy in Prometheus Bound, *JHS* 121 (2001) 107–140, considers "Zeus of this play to be not the harsh and destructive despot imagined by most today, but the benevolent source and ultimate arbiter of justice for both gods and humanity." I am not sure whether Prometheus or Io may have found comfort in this idea. Cf. also Sh.D. Sullivan, *Psychological and Ethical Ideas: What Early Greeks Say* (Mnemosyne Suppl. 144, Leiden 1995) Ch. V. 'Justice'. Recently, Lloyd-Jones rejoined the debate, in 'Zeus, Prometheus, and Greek Ethics', *HSCPh* 101 (2003) 49–72: a new defence of both *PV*'s authenticity and its general, albeit specifically early Greek, idea of divine justice. D. Cohen, The Theodicy of Aeschylus: Justice and Tyranny in the *Oresteia, G&R* 33 (1986) 129–141 (also in: I. McAuslan & P. Walcot (edd.), *Greek Tragedy* [Oxford 1993]) espec. 139, summarizes this type of rescue attempt: "Thus the justice of Zeus does prevail, but it is the arbitrary justice of the right of the stronger: persuasion and compulsion, backed by fear and force," and rejects them (*ibid.* 140 n. 11): "The problem is that few scholars like to face the intractability of the problem of evil; they would rather explain it away and believe that justice triumphs, that divinity is ultimately benevolent. As Kant has showed with devastating finality, however, in his *Über das Misslingen aller Philosophische Versuche in der Theodicee* (1791) no such comfort is rationally possible. This is, I am convinced, precisely the way in which Aeschylus wished to present the problem of innocent suffering, and easy explanations should not be sought to defuse the force of his argument." Yamagata 1994, Part I, has an insightful discussion of exactly this amphiboly in archaic Greek culture: the gods distribute good and bad fortune to man not in response to their moral behaviour, but as required by fate, and therefore do not function as the guardians of justice in the human world. Men, however, cannot abandon the wishful thinking that the gods are concerned with human morality. However, "our impression is that the god's moral functions do not meet much of human expectation" (p. 21). I agree and cannot help feeling that here we have laid a hand on the moot point in all these theories that defend the justice of Zeus by re-defining it as his care for preserving a 'cosmic order'. One recognizes the very same flaw in the never-ending discussion on divine theodicy among Christian theologians, where excusing references to God's (hidden) plans are to little avail for those who would prefer a god that punishes the evil and recompenses the good. For some illustrations see the end of this chapter.

at times exaggerate the partial truth we are stressing." While easily matching these great predecessors on the Sather chair in my inclination to exaggerate my own point, and though very much prepared to acknowledge the relevance of both continuity and change in matters of theodicy, I would like to focus my attention on another issue, namely the persistent and pervasive *lack of consistency* in expressions concerning divine causation of good and evil in archaic and early classical literature. I am referring to the constant wavering between hopeful expectation and desperate resignation, between an optimistic and a pessimistic stance, as exemplified in alternations between the belief in divine justice on the one hand, and in arbitrary fate on the other.

I will argue that, confronted with unaccountable, in particular catastrophic events, (many) Greeks of the archaic period seem to have shared one general feeling more than any other: that there is *not* one universal and monolithic principle of causation, or if there is, that no single definition would suffice in a world of great complexity. Many texts, from Homer down to the Classical period, serenely juxtapose two pictures of divine causation which—in our eyes—are incompatible: the one of seemingly amoral, arbitrary meddling, the other of moral and just intervention. In the texts which I have in mind, the two visions are not differentiated in terms of sharp boundaries, nor reconciled in an intellectually satisfying coherent system. It is my view that this picture of multiple causality must be rated among the most characteristic and pervasive traits of archaic Greek theological expression. Its recognition necessarily involves a reappraisal of the terms in which the dilemma has been conceived in scholarly discussion so far.

In the course of my argument I shall refer to a number of passages of different authors, Homer to begin with, all of them belonging to the most celebrated of Greek literature and heavily exploited in earlier scholarly discussion. Even so, I feel that a presentation of relevant texts, albeit in the form of an anthology of the most relevant phrases and expressions, is a prerequisite for adequate information, and not only for the profane. On the other hand, it will be impossible to discuss these texts in great philological detail, let alone to venture recklessly far into the arena of modern scholarly debate.

2. Homer

By way of overture—*honoris causa* and because it will lead us *medias in res*—we will tackle Hom. *Il.* 19.86–96, the notorious passage in which Agamemnon reveals his perception of the causes of his unfortunate behaviour as related in the first book of the Iliad:

> Not I am to blame. It was Zeus and Moira and the Erinys who walks in darkness that put wild *ate* in my mind, that day of the meeting, when on my own authority I confiscated Achilles' prize. What could I do? God (*theos*) accomplishes everything || Ate, the eldest daughter of Zeus, who blinds us all, the accursed one!
> ---
> Why, even Zeus was blinded by her once, and he is known to stand above all men and gods.....
>
> .....ἐγὼ δ'οὐκ αἴτιος εἰμι,
> ἀλλὰ Ζεὺς καὶ Μοῖρα καὶ ἠεροφοῖτις Ἐρινύς
> οἵ τέ μοι εἰν ἀγορῇ φρεσὶν ἔμβαλον ἄγριον ἄτην
> ἤματι τῷ ὅτ' Ἀχιλλῆος γέρας αὐτὸς ἀπηύρων.
> ἀλλὰ τί κεν ῥέξαιμι; θεὸς διὰ πάντα τελευτᾷ
> πρέσβα Διὸς θυγάτηρ Ἄτη, ἣ πάντας ἀάται....
> ---
> καὶ γὰρ δή νύ ποτε Ζῆν' ἄσατο, τόν περ ἄριστον
> ἀνδρῶν ἠδὲ θεῶν φασ' ἔμμεναι.

Then follows an intermezzo relating how Zeus, once deceived by Ate, in his rage seized her and cast her down from the Olympus, swearing that she would never come to the seat of the gods again. Next Agamemnon continues his argument contending that the same had happened to him,[28] and (136):

> I never could forget the Ate who had blinded me that day. But since I *was* blinded and Zeus robbed me of my wits....
> οὐ δυνάμην λελαθέσθ' ἄτης, ᾗ πρῶτον ἀάσθην / ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ ἀασάμην καὶ μευ φρένας ἐξέλετο Ζεύς.....

[28] It has often been remarked that with this analogy Agamemnon places himself on the same level as Zeus. The parallels between the two in the present speech have been meticulously elucidated by D. Lohmann, *Die Komposition der Reden in der 'Ilias'* (Berlin 1970) 77 f. On Agamemnon's excuse see besides Dodds 1951, 1–17, especially: R.J. Rabel, *Plot and Point of View in the Iliad* (Ann Arbor 1997) 178–186; O. Taplin, Agamemnon's Role in the *Iliad*, in: C. Pelling (ed.), *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature* (Oxford 1990), espec. 65 and 76. On Zeus' deception by Ate: H. Erbse, *Untersuchungen zur Funktion der Götter im homerischen Epos* (Berlin 1986) 11–23.

Dodds made this episode into the show-piece of the first chapter of his *Greeks and the Irrational* and others have responded. It was particularly the lavish amount of *ate* (infatuation, delusion, blind madness)[29] in a variety of nominal and verbal expressions that stimulated him to broach some seminal questions concerning tensions between human and divine responsibilities. This issue, however central in the works of so many scholars, from Dodds to Willams and from Snell to Padel,[30] is not my major concern, which, here and henceforth in this chapter,

---

[29] On *ate/Ate* and its/her working see: Dodds 1951, 38–41; *LfgrE* I, 1955, s.v. ἀάτη; Edwards comm. *ad loc.* p. 247, with bibliography, and Hainsworth *ad Il.* 9, 502. Some recent discussions: Padel 1992, 166–177; Yamagata 1994, 50–60; M. Finkelberg, Patterns of Human Error in Homer, *JHS* 115 (1995) 15–28; Padel 1995, 167–192; 197–202; 249–259; D. Hershkovitz, *The Madness of Epic. Reading Insanity from Homer to Statius* (Oxford 1998) 128 ff. Some paraphrases: "a temporary clouding or bewildering of the normal consciousness" (Dodds); "the spirit that inspires an act of irrational folly (…) one that produces unwelcome consequences" (Hainsworth); "temporary absence of understanding, ascribed to divine intervention" (Padel 1995). In the course of time the meaning developed towards the consequences of the infatuation in terms of erroneous behaviour and its punishment, and further into 'ruin.' *NP* s.v. Ate: "Die von Göttern gesandte Verwirrung der Sinne—dadurch ausgelöste Fehlhandlung—daraus resultierender Schaden." Dodds 1951, 5 calls Ate at the place under discussion not a personal agent but a "transparent piece of allegory." I am not sure that this is a useful distinction for Homer or archaic poetry in general. Cf. Poetscher 1959. The never ending discussion about personification and/or allegory has been considerable advanced by Borg 2002, 37–81, with *Ate* at pp. 44 f. and 48. Anyway, in our passage she clearly *is* personified and thus *becomes* a personal agent. Though sent by the three divine powers, she takes the initiative and henceforth acts on her own account.

[30] Some interpretations of the phenomenon of 'double motivation': M.P. Nilsson, Götter und Menschen bei Homer, *ARW* 22 (1923–4) 363–390; G.M. Calhoun, Homer's Gods: Prolegomena, *TAPhA* 68 (1937) 11–25, espec. 24 f.; G.M.A. Grube, The Gods of Homer, *Phoenix* 5 (1951) 62–78, espec. 74; A. Lesky, Göttliche und menschliche Motivation im homerischen Epos, *Sitz. Ber. Heidelberg Phil.-Hist. Kl.* 4 (1961); A. Schmitt, *Selbständigkeit und Abhängigkeit menschlichen Handelns bei Homer: Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Psychologie Homers* (Abh. Akad. Wiss. Mainz. Geist.-Sozialwiss. Kl. 1990 no. 5), on Agamemnon's *ate* especially 85–89; Williams 1993, Ch. 3 'Recognising Responsibility'; H. Erbse, Über Götter und Menschen in der Ilias Homers, *Hermes* 124 (1996) 1–16. On the same phenomenon in Herodotus: Th. Spath, *Das Motiv der doppelten Beleuchtung bei Herodot* (Diss. Wien 1968). Cf. also below nn. 52 and 54. On the shift from the attribution of the whole reponsibility to the gods towards the insight that the gods may be only partially co-responsible in Aeschylus, see: E. Fraenkel *ad Aesch. Ag.* l. 810, p. 34. The positive side of such a shared responsibility can be found in the proverbial wisdom that in order to persuade the gods into support you have to start working yourself, as expressed in the maxim σὺν Ἀθηνᾷ καὶ χεῖρα κίνει. See: Versnel 1981a, 24 with n. 89, to which add: Fraenkel's comm. Aesch. *Agamemnon* p. 373. Or as the citizens of Constantinople in 626 AD were reminded: δεῖ γὰρ μετὰ τῆς ἄνωθεν βοηθείας καὶ ἡμᾶς τὰ προσήκοντα ἐνε ργεῖν (*Akatisth Synaxarium*, Migne P.G. 92, col. 1349). A full discussion in J. Jouanna, La main de dieu qui touche. Remarques sur l'emploi d'une maxime, *REG* 106 (1993) 181–194. Striking parallels from the modern Mediterranean: Banfield 1958, 108 f.; Friedl 1962, 75 f.

focuses on the more complex problems inherent in a gamut of diverse but concurrent natural, supernatural, and divine forms of causation.

Agamemnon's plea for excuse has grown into a notorious *crux interpretum*.[31] My primary concern is the question of how precisely Zeus *and* Moira *and* Erinys are supposed to relate and indeed co-operate. For co-operation it is: they are depicted as acting together in putting wild *ate* in Agamemnon's mind. Theologically, Zeus and Moira do have a family resemblance and are sometimes mentioned together on varying levels of relationship.[32] However, "Erinys is somewhat surprising here" to quote an understatement by one commentator,[33] since the customary responsibility of the Erinues in Homer is the execution of curses with regard to violations of the moral and natural order, the persecution of crimes against parents, betrayal of family and the punishment of oath-breakers.[34]

The core of the problem lies in the conjunction of three dissimilar agents: one personal 'mythological' god (Zeus) who in the Iliad generally exercises his supreme power in an arbitrary—at least inscrutable—way, betraying some interest in the execution of justice exclusively in punishing perjurers, and those who wrong suppliants and *xenoi*.[35] The second actor on this stage began her career as a non-personal principle

---

[31] Already in antiquity, as various remarks in the scholia testify. See: Davies 1995, who offers a good introduction to the various problems in the text.

[32] Also in cult Zeus is sometimes connected with the Fates. As Moiragetes he had a temple in Delphi (Paus. 10.24.4), a cult in Athens (*IG* I^3 7) and an altar at Olympia (Paus. 5.15.5). The Moirai received sacrifice together with Zeus Patroos at Halikarnassos (*Syll.*^{3} 1044.5). Cf. Bowra 1961, 410, and below n. 43.

[33] M.W. Edwards, *The Iliad. A Commentary* V (Cambridge 1991) *ad loc.*

[34] A to my mind inadmissible solution is the one by Leaf "that from this passage it appears that they have wider functions." The Erinues (always plural except here and at *Od.* 15.234) appear seven times in the *Iliad* and five times in the *Odyssey*, often as executors of a curse. As avengers of some serious infringement of family codes: *Il.* 9.454; 9.572; 15.204; perhaps also 21.412, where Hera curses her son Ares for behaving against her will; 15.234 (doubtful); *Od.* 2.135; 11.280. Brutalizing a *xenos*: *Od.* 17.474. Atoning for a crime of a father: *Od.* 15.234? False oath: *Il.* 19.259. Unclear: *Il.* 19.418, where the Erinyes check the voice of the horse Xanthos when he is predicting the death of Achilleus (thus restoring normal boundaries between man and animal?). *And* still *very* unclear our *Il.* 19.86–91. See on some of the enigmatic testimonia just mentioned: S.I. Johnston, Penelope and the Erinyes: *Od.* 20, 61–82, *Helios* 21/2 (1994) 137–159; *eadem*, Xanthus, Hera and the Erinyes: *Il.* 19.400–419, *TAPhA* 122 (1992) 85–98. More recent lit. in *NP* s.v. Erinys.

[35] On Zeus' 'moral functions' of this type, espec. on Zeus Xenios, Hiketesios, and Horkios see: Yamagata 1994, 4–13.

representing 'one's portion or share'[36] developing into 'that which is destined to be', often translated as 'one's fate'.[37] She is often pictured as an independent deified personification and so she seems to be here, witness her position in between two personal agents and joining these partners in a common action.[38] The third is a demonic authority prosecuting and punishing a person guilty of the specific transgressions just mentioned, and thus introducing the element of personal culpability as opposed to the ambivalent rule of the highest god and the arbitrary, but mostly negative, actions of Moira.

The three do not fit smoothly together, an unpleasant situation that prompts interpreters to go in search of connotations that may clarify their presence and co-operation in one passage. As did Dodds, p. 6/7: after defining Zeus as the mythological agent (being the only individual Olympian who is credited with causing *ate* in the Iliad) and *moira* as the 'portion' or 'lot'[39] that befell Agamemnon as the concrete

---

[36] On the possible origin of *moira/moros* and related concepts of fate (δαίμων, νέμειν, αἶση) in the context of distribution of portions of sacrificial meat see fundamentally: G.J. Baudy, Hierarchie oder: Die Verteilung des Fleisches. Eine ethologische Studie über die Tischordnung als Wurzel sozialer Organisation, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der altgriechischen Gesellschaft, in: B. Gladigow & H.R. Kippenberg (edd.), *Neue Ansätze zur Religionswissenschaft* (Munich 1983) 131–174.

[37] There is some truth in the description by R.P. Winnington-Ingram, *Studies in Aeschylus* (Cambridge 1983) 171, "that *moira* (in whatever degree of personification, singular or plural)—and indeed the whole wide vocabulary of fatality—connotes the rigid, the intractable, the violent, the blind, the primitive, aspect of divine operation."

[38] Most (but not all) editors grant her a capital here, as of course at other places in Homer. That the Moirai boasted cults in later times (Corinth and Thebes, Paus. 2.4.7 and 9.25.4, respectively) cannot be taken as directly relevant for Homer. More relevant perhaps is the prayer to the Moirai (*TGF* p. XX) ascribed to Simonides by von Wilamowitz and again with extensive argumentation by Bowra 1961, Appendix II, 'A Prayer to the Fates' (= *CQ* 8 [1958] 231–240). This prayer draws heavily on Hesiod's equally personalized picture of the Moirai. See below p. 233. On Dodds' view see next note.

[39] He argues at p. 7, that "Moira is not yet a personal goddess who dictates Zeus or Cosmic Destiny like the Hellenistic Heimarmene." Rather "by treating his 'portion' as an agent—by making it *do* something—Agamemnon is taking a first step towards personification." Though both statements may be correct in themselves, as *arguments* they fail to justify his translation "*my* portion" and the concomitant refusal to write *moira* with a capital. The problem here is whether author and audience clearly differentiated between the two visions. See above n. 29. The next dilemma, then, concerns the choice between two further options: Nilsson *GGR* I, 364: Moira as a personification here comes into being "unter unseren Augen," or W. Poetscher, Moira, Themis und τιμή im homerischen Denken, *WS* 73 (1960) 5–39, espec. 24, who argues that right from the beginning both aspects, the abstract and the person, were inseparably present in the concept of Moira. Aesch. *PV*. 511 provides a splendid instance of how *moira* (the thing) and *Moira* (the divine agent) are conflated in one expression: "Moira has not been destined to end my pains yet" (Μοῖρα.....πέπρωται) which is

effect of Zeus' decision, he suggested that "Erinys, then, could be the immediate agent who "ensures the fulfillment of a *moira*." He thus made an attempt to mould the so far enigmatic parataxis of three disparate agents into an—in our view more manageable—hypotactic relationship. However, the closely comparable exculpating formula of the horse Xanthos in *Il.* 19.409 f.: "not we are to blame, but the great god (= Zeus) and strong Moira (Μοῖρα κραταιή)," invalidates the identification of *moira* = portion. The epithet argues in favour of the personal nature of Moira side by side with Zeus. As to Erinys, the cautious wording of the last part of his suggestion betrays Dodds' own doubts. With good reason, for in Homer it is *not* the Furies' regular job to take care of the fulfilment of a *moira*. On the other hand, their specific *retributive* responsibilities in no way tally with any act of Agamemnon the poet had deigned to inform the reader/listener about. Last but not least, her juxtaposition with either one of the two other agents in the present context is unique in Homer.[40]

What we detect in Dodds' (and not only in his) interpretation is an example of a typically modern drive towards transparency and explicitness, a desire to bring to light a coherence that Homer left implicit and opaque.[41] Such assumptions naturally raise the question whether Homer indeed did have a 'theory' or even as much as a vague

---

an amalgamation of Μοῖρα οὔπω ταῦτα κραίνει and οὔπω ταῦτα πέπρωται as Griffith 1983, comm. *a.l.* shows, concluding on *moira*: "the status of this word is impossible to define with precision." Just so in Homer. See also Fraenkel, *ad* Aesch. *Agam*. 1535 f., and πεπρωμένη μοῖρα in Herodotus (below p. 185). Cf. also below n. 42.

[40] In cult (few) connections between Moirai and Erinyes do occur. See Bowra 1961, 412; Wüst *RE* Suppl. 8, 86–91. In Aesch. *PV* 516 the Erinyes are united with the Moirai, but their relationship is far from clear and certainly not unequivocal. See the commentaries of Groeneboom and Griffith 1983, *ad loc.* and below n. 44. On Zeus, Moira, and the Erinyes in Aeschylos see: P.W. Winnington-Ingram, *o.c.* (above n. 37), 154–174, espec. 170 ff. On the (changing) nature of the Erinyes in the *Oresteia*: A.L. Brown, The Erinys in the Oresteia: Real Life, the Supernatural, and the Stage, *JHS* 103 (1983) 13–34. Recently: Parker 2009, 148–153.

[41] Throughout the present chapter there will be warnings against the dangers of overinterpretation (on the term see below n. 105) and in particular of modern readers' drive to rashly assume connections, underlying meanings and author's intentions in their texts, sometimes explicitly appealing to the author's *intentional* silence. For Homer one might by way of example mention R. Janko, *The Iliad: A Commentary* vol. 4 (Cambridge 1992) *ad* 16.384–393: "The poet comes near to an open justification of Troy's fall*, all the more persuasive because we are left to infer it for ourselves*" (my italics). Many of the desperate attempts to detect 'justice' in Zeus' acts in the *Iliad* resort to such *e silentio* arguments. See for a caustic, but correct, criticism of this type of creative reading of Homer: A.M. van Erp Taalman Kip, The Gods of the Iliad and the Fate of Troy, *Mnemosyne* 53 (2000) 385–402, espec. 395–399. On

notion about the coherence of the three agents and their functions. And corollary to this a second question prompts itself: did he need to have one? The many studies on Moira[42] and the ways in which Zeus and Moira (or Aisa) are supposed to cohere or interact in epic, and *a fortiori* the variety of different, often conflicting, upshots of these studies justify these questions. They certainly do nothing to weaken the conclusions drawn, long ago, by scholars such as Eitrem, Nilsson, Poetscher and Burkert, that the workings of Fate (*Moira, Aisa*) and those of 'the god(s)' or Zeus, are essentially separate, independent, often inextricable, but freely co-existent conceptions.[43] As they continue to be in later Greek literature, as we will see.[44]

---

assumedly deliberate devices of *paralipsis* or implicitness in later archaic lyric poetry (espec. Pindar) and Herodotus, see below pp. 192–194.

[42] Eitrem, art. Moira, *RE* 1932, 2449–2497; W. Krause, Die Ausdrücke für das Schicksal bei Homer, *Glotta* 25 (1936) 143–152; *idem*, Zeus und Moira in Homer, *WS* 64 (1949) 10–52; U. Bianchi, *ΔΙΟΣ ΑΙΣΑ. Destino, uomini e divinità nell'epos, nelle teogonie e nel culto dei Greci* (Rome 1953); Chantraine 1954, 69–73; B.C. Dietrich, *Death, Fate, and the Gods. The Development of a Religious Idea in Greek Popular Belief and in Homer* (London 1965); J.V. Morrison, *Kerostasia*, the Dictates of Fate, and the Will of Zeus in the *Iliad, Arethusa* 30 (1997) 273–307 (arguing for a tension deliberately created by 'the author' between predetermination by Fate and freedom of decision) with further literature. Yamagata 1994, 105–120 has a good discussion of the different scholarly positions with an attractive conclusion. See also the good summary of the *Stand der Forschung* in: A. Henrichs, art. Moira in: *NP* 8 (2000). On personified Moirai see: S. De Angelis, *LIMC* VI 1 (1992) 636–648.

[43] Eitrem 1932, 2453 (with earlier literature at 2459): "Beide Auffassungen (viz. Moira as superior or inferior to the god[s]) behaupten sich ruhig nebeneinander, eine harmonisierende homerische Dogmatik durchzuführen ist aussichtlos;" Nilsson *GGR* I, 364: "Die Vorstellung von Schicksal und diejenige der Götter und ihre Macht (sind) zwei voneinander unabhängige und frei nebeneinander herlaufenden Auffasungen des Lebens;" Poetscher *o.c.* (preceding note) 24: "eine Lösung im Sinne einer Über- oder Unterordnung erweist sich als unmöglich," and cf. *idem* in *NP* s.v. Moira col. 1394; Burkert 1985, 129, on the relation between Zeus and Moira: "For causal thinking an insoluble problem results from the opposition between fateful predetermination and divine freedom. For the *Iliad* this is not a problem but a conflict which must be fought out, just as the whole of life is marked by conflicts." Cf. Chantraine 1957, 69–73; Lloyd-Jones 1971, 4 f. with n. 19. Griffith 1983, 18: "In Homer, the relationship between 'Fate' (μοῖρα, αἶσα, κήρ, τὸ πεπρωμένον) and the gods is left undetermined." Even Tsagarakis 1977, 129, who generally likes his Homeric characters straight, must admit: "Zeus' relation to *moira* is not quite clear."

[44] The shifts and inversions in the relative positions attributed to Zeus and Moira or Moirai, in the oeuvre, sometimes even in one work, of one author, are a striking case in point and may bewilder the modern reader. Extremes in Homer are for instance *Dios aisa* and *kerostasia* on the one hand and *Od.* 3.236 ff. on the other. Most typically we also find the amphiboly in Aeschylus, who pictures Zeus as the master of the Moirai at one place (Aesch. *Cho.* 306 f.; *Supp.* 524 ff.; 822), and as subject to their whims at another (*PV* 516 ff.). He also problematizes the issue in the discussion between the chorus and Prometheus (*PV* 511–518), where Prometheus holds Moira,

So there may be room for a different approach. If we fail to make progress by means of a semantic analysis, perhaps a functionalist one may bring relief. It is obvious that all expressions under discussion share the functional nature of belonging to a fixed formulaic stock of pleas for excuse. Our passage is most explicit in this respect. For after having introduced the disastrous effects of the allied forces of Zeus, Moira and Erinys, Agamemnon continues: "What could I do? (modern Greek: τί να κάνω;) God (deity, divine power) accomplishes everything (modern Greek: πρώτα ο θεός or θεός έχει)," and then starts a fresh, extensive, excursus in which Ate gets the blame for his own ill-considered behaviour. Similar references to a superior steering principle in terms of god, the gods, daimon, fate, fortune, chance,[45] abound in archaic poetry, and not only there, functioning either as strategies to make sense of—and hence provide an excuse for—unaccountable self-damaging conduct, or as a formula of resignation or solace in a situation of undeserved misfortune.[46] As a matter of fact Agamemnon specializes in the use of such excuse formulas.[47]

---

who is implicitly identified with *ananke* by the chorus, responsible for his sufferings, after which he says that *Ananke* is directed by the "three Moirai and the remembering Erinyes" (Μοῖραι τρίμορφοι μνήμονες τ' Ἐρινύες). When the chorus asks if then they are stronger than Zeus, his answer is: "Even he could not escape that which is ordained" (τὴν πεπρωμένην). If the division of the divine tasks may shift so radically in one passage where they are the subject of an analytical discourse, what can we expect from a passage in Homer? See Groeneboom *a.l.* and especially Griffith 1983, 18, on the shifts in the *PV*: "and, as so often in tragedy, overall responsibility for the general workings of the universe, and the particular workings of the play, cannot be laid on any single person or power." The alternations between Zeus and Moira are a never ending story. See e.g. the significantly inconsistent phrasing of *H. Orph.* 59, 11–14, "Moira is the only one (μόνη), and nobody else of the immortals, who looks after humans' lives. *And* Zeus's perfect eye. Because whatever happens to us, it is Moira *and* the mind of Zeus who knows (οἶδε, singular!) everything." Later still: Banfield 1958, 108, on modern rural South Italy: "God exists and deserves respect. But there is no use trying to gain his favor by worship," quoting a peasant: 'God is luck, and if luck could be managed by intention, it would not be luck.'" And *ibidem* p. 124 f. on the arbitrariness of God's decisions: "He may distribute bounty or catastrophe according to his whim."

[45] Instances of god, the gods, daimon etc. who are taken to be responsible for unaccountable acts or events in Dodds 1951, 4, 11, 12; Chantraine 1954, 49–56.

[46] The 'excuse' motive might be taken as addressed to a 2nd person, the 'resignation' one rather to the 1st person (the speaker himself) in the terminology of Seitel and Lardinois, as we shall discuss below n. 175. In this respect it is important to emphasize that these strategies of exculpation are nearly always on the lips of the characters, and not launched as author's comments, as e.g. Chantraine 1954, 51 f. emphasized for the use of *daimon*. There is a certain correlation between these excuses and 'white lies', which in modern Greece may serve the same goal, namely "to conceal an inability to

On a psychological level, then, blaming a divine power is a device for simultaneously acknowledging one's own acts as errors (implying at least a whiff of one's own accountability) *and* attributing the cause of it all to another agent. From a functionalistic perspective I would suggest we understand references to 'the god', 'the gods', and particularly *ate* in such expressions as devices to facilitate such a 'double entendre'. Albeit not releasing the offender from his responsibility and his duty to redress it, this excuse formula may help both to save his face and to open up avenues in the social process of reconciliation, as it indeed works out several times in the Iliad.[48] Hence, assessing the formulas from this socio-functionalist angle rather than (solely) through a—so far obstinate and unsatisfactory—semantic analysis may open a more

---

live up to the highest requirements of the social code as well as to conceal unintentional failures," as discussed by du Boulay 1976, 400–404. Cf. Barnes 1994, 72–75, and, very instructive on modern Near Eastern lying strategies, M. Gilsenan, Lying, Honor, and Contradiction, in: B. Kapferer (ed.), *Transaction and Meaning: Directions in the Anthropology of Exchange and Symbolic Behavior* (Philadelphia 1976) 191–219, on lies that become vital in situations on the brink of "successful maintenance or degradation of self" when, "at the terminal point of crisis, room for maneuver and redefinition has vanished and persons can no longer keep it socially invisible." As such these lies, too, are socially accepted or at least expected, hence condoned.

[47] As in his earlier 'confession' in *Il.* 9.18: Ζεύς με μέγας Κρονίδης ἄτῃ ἐνέδησε βαρείῃ, in line 21 substituting ἀπάτη for ἄτῃ, both terms referring to the general frustration of his expectations concerning the success of the whole expedition (as it does in 8.236 f.: Ζεῦ πάτερ, ἦ ῥά τιν' ἤδη ὑπερμενέων βασιλήων τῇδ' ἄτῃ ἆσας καί μιν μέγα κῦδος ἀπηύρας;), not yet to his own error. However in *Il.* 9.115 ff. Agamemnon accepts Nestor's good analysis of his *ate* in his behaviour versus Achilleus, openly confessing: ἀασάμην, οὐδ' αὐτὸς ἀναίνομαι, and adding in line 119: "But since I *was* infatuated (ἀασάμην again) giving in to a lamentable impulse, I am willing to go back on it" (and appease Achilleus with gifts). See O. Taplin *o.c.* above n. 28 for a very personal and modern critique on such behaviour.

[48] *Il.* 9.496 ff., in the words of Phoenix, provides the relevant theology in the unique allegorical description of *Litai* (Prayers of repentance), daughters of Zeus, who literally "are at pains to follow in the steps of swift Ate" (504, αἵ ῥά τε καὶ μετόπισθ' Ἄτης ἀλέγουσι κιοῦσαι) and by placating the offended person, bring about reconciliation and restored communication: "They heal again [the harm done by Ate]" (507, αἵ δ'ἐξακέονται ὀπίσσω). These two expressions clearly show that an appeal to Ate as explanation of unaccounted misconduct functions as an appeal to appeasement and restoration or relations. N. Yamagata, Ate and the Litai in Homer's Iliad, in: E. Stanford & J. Herrin (edd.), *Personification in the Greek World: From Antiquity to Byzantium* (Aldershot 2006), argues that in this passage it is Achilles himself who 'personifies' Ate in that he is taken as the model for the description of the goddess. On *Litai* in relation with *dikè* see: D. Aubriot, Les Litai d'Homère et la *Dikè* d'Hésiode, *REG* 97 (1984) 1–25; *eadem*, Λίσσομαι et la droite justice: de l'*Iliade* à Epicure, in: J. Brunschwig *et alii* (edd.), *Histoire et structure, à la mémoire de V. Goldschmidt* (Paris 1985) 27–42.

promising avenue to attain an appreciation of this enigmatic multiplicity of causation.

Significantly, we do not find comments on such face saving strategies of excuse in the Homeric epos itself. They are taken for granted and never provoke discussion. There is only one exception: the critical note by Zeus, in the first book of the Odyssey that we have seen earlier, in which he lodges a complaint against this type of impious mud flinging by mortals in distress. Later writings, on the other hand, abound in critical, not infrequently scornful, comments on such behaviour. Scholia *ad loc*. for instance note: "Even now those who cannot defend themselves by the simple truth lay the whole blame on fate" (τῇ εἱμαρμένῃ). Polyb. 36.17.2 scorns the person who, when feeling unable to find the cause of events "puts the blame on the god and on fortune" (ἐπὶ τὸν θεὸν τὴν ἀναφορὰν ποιοῖτο καὶ τὴν τύχην).[49] We have here a Hellenistic 'translation' as it were of the Homeric couple Zeus and Moira, also here connected by the word 'and'—not 'or'—but this time denounced by a critical outsider. If in this case modern scholars are less prone to launch a search for a 'theory' behind the relationship of the two, this may be due to the enormous amount of relevant information available. In the Hellenistic and Roman periods this type of potentially inconsistent blame attribution proliferates in often unsophisticated funerary inscriptions and epigrammatic poetry on the one hand, *and* is well-represented in the criticism of contemporaneous philosophical treatises written by intellectuals who try to create order in this supernatural chaos, on the other. Why do we stubbornly persist in interrogating Homer on questions of semantic coherence which nobody would tend to press in these later texts? Are we perhaps trying to save the Poet from the verdict of lack of sophistication by trying to exact a theological/philosophical reflection from his text? Do we fear, perhaps, that lack of a logical system in these formulas of excuse might affect their credibility in the eyes of either the addressee or the ancient

[49] Cf. Wallbank comm. *ad loc.* 10.5.8. For more examples in Polybios see *idem*, vol. I p. 22, on, for instance, people who attribute what is really due to an individual's skill εἰς θεοὺς καὶ τύχας, showing the same conjunction of Zeus and Moira, which however is typical of Hellenistic perception. Cf. *e.g.* Ap. Rhod. 3.328: καί σφ' ἀπέρυκεν Ζηνὸς νόος ἠέ τις αἶσα. And below n. 54. An Orphic gold tablet from Thurii (South Italy) (A. Bernabé, *Orphicorum et Orphicis similium testimonia et fragmenta* 1, 2 [Munich-Leipzig 2004–2005] no. 489B) has: "Either Fate mastered me or the lightning bolt thrown by the thunderer."

reader/listener or both? Let us consult some specialists on formulas of excuse.

Herzfeld 1982 is a revealing study on the modern Greek social practice of excusing various kinds of failure or misconduct by referring them to the influence of supernatural, uncontrollable agents. At p. 645 we read:

> Whether people believe them or not, they are evidently willing to countenance such excuses, provided only that the excuses exhibit certain appropriate, stereotypical characteristics. To focus on the *credibility* of the excuses thus seems a red herring; their *acceptability* which is far more easily demonstrated, still demands an explanation. Indeed, acceptability is a precondition for credibility.[50]

Now, this acceptability, as Austin 1971 in a path-breaking study had argued, is far less concerned with the logical, argumentative qualities of the formulas themselves than with the social codes of acceptance of traditional formulas and their ability to draw on a substratum of ideas about causation, even though these ideas may belong to long forgotten or radically transformed systems of thought. There may be etymological connections involved—Austin pp. 99–100 speaks of 'trailing clouds of etymology'—but "they are a form of indirect allusion. They are not links between referential meanings as such." Or once more in the words of Herzfeld 1982, 667:

---

[50] The theme is also at issue in theories of cognitive consistency. Human behaviour obeys an 'internal logic', or 'psycho-logic' rather than a formal logic. See: R.L. Atkinson & R.C. Atkinson *et alii, Introduction to Psychology* (Orlando 1993) 728 f. Abelson (1968) 112–139 proposes that many of our attitudes come packaged as *opinion molecules*. Each molecule is made up of (a) a belief, (b) an attitude, and (c) a perception of social support for the opinion. (.....) Opinion molecules serve important social functions. First, they act as conversational units, giving us something to say when a particular topic comes up in conversation. They also give a rational appearance to our unexamined agreement with friends and neighbours on social issues. But most important, they serve as badges of identification with our important social groups, reinforcing our sense of belonging to a community. Not unrelated but more wide-ranging is the concept of "cultural model" introduced by N. Quin & D. Holland (edd.), *Cultural Models in Language and Thought* (Cambridge 1987), which they define as a narrative, prototypical, schematic, and simplified form of social knowledge, available to interpret events. Particularly relevant to our topic is their stressing of the simultaneity of a variety of cultural models (pp. 6–8). At p. 10 they claim: "That there is no coherent cultural system of knowledge, only an array of different culturally shared schematizations formulated for the performance of particular cognitive tasks, accounts for the co-existence of conflicting cultural models encountered in many domains of existence."

> The key question thus shifts from how belief in fate influences action, to how declarations about fate constitute a form of action—the performative action of excuses. Instead of literal statements of belief in fate, it addresses performances that invoke the idea of fate through oblique allusion.[51]

So I would suggest we take a pause in feeding red herrings to Homer, and stop hassling the author by confronting him with questions which, not being a philosopher nor a literary critic, he simply had no inclination to contemplate at that special moment and in that context.[52] Later in this chapter I hope to demonstrate the consequences of such (un)scholarly behaviour. At this point I restrict myself to citing the final verdict by Herzfeld: "In such a context, the ethnographer's questions about belief in fate are impertinent both socially and methodologically."[53] In the view of an anthropologist, then, Agamemnon's appeal to Zeus *and* Moira *and* the Furies (*and* Ate) is basically nothing more than an adaptation of a common formulary strategy. Agamemnon just lists the divine instances who conventionally share the function of being targets for blame attribution in pleas for excuse. One type of adaptation may be seen in the poet's freedom to weave an elaborate narrative on any one of them, as he does here in the case

---

[51] The inspiration of performative working of language is of course derived from J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (edited by J.O. Urmson & M. Sbisá, Cambridge Mass. 1975²). Cf. R. Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance* (Rowley MA 1977).

[52] In later Greek literature the problem inherent in multiple causation may be resolved or made explicit as for instance in Eur. *HF* 20–21, "whether subdued by Hera and her goads or by necessity," where the overdetermination is implicitly invalidated by using εἴτε…εἴτε; in 828, where it is unclear whether 'necessity' and 'father Zeus' are mutually identified or united. The famous verse 1135, where the question "who killed these children" is answered with "you and your bow and of the gods whoever is to blame" (σὺ καὶ σὰ τόξα καὶ θεῶν ὃς αἴτιος), at least betrays the intention of prompting the listener to reflection. See: G.W. Bond, *Euripides Heracles* (Oxford 1981) *a.l.* with many parallels. In the *Phoenissae* 350–353, Iokaste sums up the causes of the afflictions scourging the city of Thebes: "whether it is the sword or strife or your father to blame; or whether the gods (*to daimonion*) have reveled destructively against the house of Oedipus" (εἴτε σίδαρος, εἴτ' ἔρις, εἴτε πατὴρ ὁ σὸς αἴτιος εἴτε τὸ δαιμόνιον κατεκώμασε δώμασι Οἰδιπόδα). See Mastronarde *comm. ad loc.* for this principle of "multiple causation." He suggests that 'iron' may be malevolent magic. Cf. also Eur. *Or.* 1496 ff. where Helena's disappearance is imputed to ἤτοι φαρμάκοις (charms) ἢ μάγων τέχναισιν (wizardry) ἢ θεῶν κλοπαῖς (stolen by the gods) with Willink's note.

[53] Cf. J.F. Holleman, *Accommodating the Spirit amongst some North-Eastern Shona Tribes* (London 1953) 35 f., who argues against asking non-Western (including early Greek) people direct questions, "because it places them in a realistic frame of mind. They are forced to analyse, define and distinguish with a critical mind what is essentially vague, undefinable and largely emotional."

of Ate. Another adaptation is the extraordinary *accumulation* of the blame targets, which may have been inspired by the excessive consequences of his unfortunate behaviour and the extreme necessity to redress the situation. In other words, Agamemnon resorts to redundancy, or, in the words of Dodds, extreme 'overdetermination', keeping all options vague, but open.[54]

If, nonetheless, we still cannot restrain ourselves from hunting for an explanation—in particular for the presence of the Erinys—and do not find convincing evidence of comparable activities for her elsewhere in the Homeric epic, we may consider that this is an additional and rather daringly novel strategy of overdetermination. To the irreducible will of Zeus, which may turn out positive or negative, and the irreducible but nearly always fatally detrimental ways of Moira, one definitely and exclusively retributive authority is added. This, however, would entail the assumption that she is hunting down Agamemnon for something (anything) within his own responsibility that may have happened prior to *Il.* 1.1 and of which he himself *may be* and the reader/listener definitely *is* unaware.[55] Quite some *argumentum e silentio.* One aspect of Erinys may have further fostered the choice: besides Zeus she is the only other divine agent that once "led heavy Ate" upon a person (*Od.* 15.234) in a phrase very similar to our passage, an aspect which was

---

[54] Just as in our culture a person who has been threatened with a knife by the neighbour at whose door he was complaining about the decibels produced by his TV, may explain later: "*Thank God*, by a *lucky accident* a friend of mine *chanced* to pass by, knocked out the bastard and rescued me. *Fortunately*, there is still *justice*." Dodds borrowed the concept 'overdetermination' from the field of psychology (see Dodds 1951, 30 ff.). The most explicit instance in the *Iliad* is at 16.849, ἀλλά με Μοῖρ' ὀλοὴ καὶ Λητοῦς ἔκτανεν υἱός, ἀνδρῶν δ' Εὔφορβος. Patroclus attributes his death *directly* to the immediate agent the man Euphorbos, and *indirectly* to the mythological agent Apollo, but from a *subjective* standpoint to his bad *moira*. Cf. such instances as Diomedes' remarks that Achilles will fight "when the thumos in his chest tells him to and a god rouses him" (*Il.* 9.702). Cf. *Il.* 18.119 (Moira and the wrath of Hera); 21.84 (Moira and Zeus, who surrendered me to your hands); 22.297–303 (Theoi, Athena, Zeus and Apollo, Moira). R.K. Fisher, The Concept of Miracle in Homer, *Antichthon* 29 (1995) 1–14, espec. 5, on overdetermination: "It is about the drawing on different points of view or levels of interpretation which are understood to describe events in their own terms, but which may not necessarily rule out other terms of description with their own validity." Generally he concludes: "The event is doubly determined, on the natural and on the supernatural plane."

[55] One may compare proverbial expressions such as "which god did we offend, that we are suffering this?" as we discussed in our first chapter p. 43.

readily exploited in later literature where the Furies were thought to strike their victims with *mania*.[56]

While the psycho-social *function* of the plea for excuse can be ascertained beyond serious doubt on account of both context and explicit textual information, suggestions about the semantic coherence of the divine actors in cases like the present one can never elude the dilemma of whether they are a re-construction of the author's intention or a modern construct, the product of the reader's creative imagination. This, of course, is the key problem of literary criticism and hermeneutics in general.[57] Or rather, it should be, for, as we shall have ample occasion to observe, this is not every philologist's most pressing concern. Hence, this dilemma will re-emerge time and again in the present chapter.

Dodds (p. 4) seems to have realized this. In a comparable case of excuse formula he wondered: "are we dealing with anything more than a *façon de parler*?" Now, more than fifty years later, I myself would like to reformulate this as a question serving my own line of interest: suppose we discover that we *are* dealing with a way of speaking, a maxim, aphorism, saying, dictum, as I have just argued, do we need more to make this discovery worthy of scholarly interest?[58] Is the qualification 'a way of speaking' the end or perhaps the starting point of further reflection? We have taken cognizance of the opinion of some modern experts. In the present chapter I will argue that downplaying the specific archaic Greek way of coping with the inscrutable ways of 'the gods' is one of the surest means to miss the core of much of what we would call Greek religion. Their 'way of speaking' is far more essential

[56] The Erinyes were worshipped under the name of Maniai at Megalopolis (Paus. 8.34.1). See on the relationship of *ate* and the Erinyes in Greek literature, especially tragedy: Padel 1992, 162–172.

[57] As is *occasionally* acknowledged. M. Frede & G. Striker, *Rationality in Greek Thought* (Oxford 1999) for instance show that ancient texts have often been misinterpreted through the influence of modern ideas of reason, and seek to redress the balance. M. Heath, *Unity in Greek Poetics* (Oxford 1989) made it the core of a comprehensive critique. Recent attempts to *re-construct* the principle of polychromy in Greek monumental art after the 19th century *construction* of the Greek aesthetic ideal through misreading its 'blank' intentions ever since Winckelmann, are a perfect illustration of what I am saying. See: R. Panzanelli, E.D. Schmidt & K. Lapatin (edd.), *The Color of Life: Polychromy in Sculpture from Antiquity to the Present* (Los Angeles 2008).

[58] And not only because "even a *façon de parler* must have an origin" (Dodds 1951, 5).

to a productive understanding of Greek religion than we may have realized.

Before we continue our explorations, however, I would like, just for a moment, to pay attention to a second riddle in the passage under discussion, less, if at all, examined in modern commentaries. It is the question about the identity of "the god who accomplishes everything" who is mentioned after Zeus, Moira and Erinys, and before Ate. The question would be hardly worth asking in the case of the 'great God' referred to by the speaking horse, Xanthos, who is obviously Zeus, or in the numerous Homeric passages where *theos* or *theoi* (and even Zeus) are just generic expressions denoting 'supreme anonymous supernatural steering power'.[59] In our passage, however, the question is prompted by the complexity of its context. Even if he had wished to, Homer himself could not have helped the reader since he 'lived' in an age before punctuation (as well as before writing). It is the modern need to punctuate that reveals the problem. Some editors put a period after τελευτᾷ, implying that a divine principle different from Ate must be intended. Others print a comma, or even more explicitly the Greek equivalent of a colon, obviously thinking that the expression must refer to the following Ate.[60] The choice for a period involves two possible interpretations: a) *theos* is just the general proverbial expression of anonymous divine authority and nothing more;[61] b) *theos* may be taken as a comprehensive term, here in particular encompassing the three preceding different notions Zeus, Moira, Erinys. These two options, though not constituting a particularly happy alliance, are not necessarily incompatible in that both represent a closing comment on what has been said before. On the other hand, both are incompatible with the third, prospective one, which identifies *theos* with the

[59] Else 1949; François 1957, 21–47, and cf. the next section of this chapter. O. Tsagarakis, *Nature and Background of Major Concepts of Divine Power in Homer* (Amsterdam 1977), is far from proving his thesis that *theos* and *theoi* never stand for a divine abstract but presuppose familiar gods without commitment to a precise identification. Even less is it self-evident that *theos* in our passage should be "not a god or any god but the god par excellence, i.e. Zeus," as he argues at p. 80. And this is not the only weakness of this book as critics have not failed to point out.

[60] "By θεός he could have meant ἄτη:" Dietrich *o.c.* (above n. 42) 203 n. 2. This is the explicit view of Ahrens 1937, 32, who takes the total expression, from θεός till ἀᾶται, as a gnome.

[61] E.g. J.U. Faesi, *Homers Iliade* II (Leipzig 1855) 238, "im Allgemeinen: die höhere, göttliche Macht;" Ameis-Hentze: "θεός allgemein: die Gottheit;" Leaf: "θεός, divine power, is not to be taken as identical with Ἄτη."

following Ate.[62] The qualification of 'eldest daughter of Zeus' is virtually incompatible with her being *theos* either in the pregnant gnomic meaning or in the comprehensive meaning which would include Zeus, as for instance Leaf[63] reminds us. Once again we are confronted with an insoluble problem. For what has to be ruled out from a semantic point of view appears to be required by the syntax, which simply does not seem to tolerate an alternative to equating, or at least relating, *theos* with the gods mentioned just before *and* with Ate, which follows, immediately and asyndetically, standing in full syntactic dependence on the preceding line as it—necessarily—is taken by most translators.

One can imagine three different approaches to deal with the aporia. One is to push as hard as intellectually possible—or harder—in trying to reconcile the irreconcilable through ingenious conjectures. I have not seen a successful one: the scholia in particular are exemplarily ingenious *and* deterring.[64] Another is to conclude that there is something *very* suspicious about the constitution and tradition of the text, which, with respect to Homeric epic, usually equals 'later insertion'. Though opposites, both strategies are equally characteristic of the modern mind. The third suggestion might be that the principle of free association, offered, perhaps rather prompted, by the general denotation of *theos*, allows for an even greater variety of implementations than one might have imagined. The author may indeed have seized the opportunity to create a sudden and unexpected implementation[65] even if it yielded unmanageable internal inconsistencies with other parts of his text. As it did. In this view the term *theos*, which autonomously may function as a general gnomic notion, by its context attracted the function of a *traît-d'union* between the preceding and the following, with an unpredicted (and probably unintended) but highly productive result. Retrospectively it may be seen as referring back to Zeus, Moira

---

[62] This becomes apparent by the urge to provide Ate with a verbal form like ἐστί. So older editors *i.a.* Faesi, Monro, La Roche.

[63] Comm. *ad loc.* Implicitly Dodds is of the same opinion when he calls Ate not a personal agent, but a "transparent piece of allegory" (above n. 29).

[64] The scholia fully acknowledge the problems of the text constitution. One proposes to read θεοὺς διὰ, giving the sense: "through the gods everything comes to completion." Another reads θεόσδια = θεόσδοτα. Particularly ingenious is the suggestion to split διά into δή und ἵα, resulting in: "For *one* god accomplishes everything: Ate."

[65] I see no objection to following Aristarchos who, according to some scholia, says that some things are due simply to chance inspiration (κατ' ἐπιφοράν) and that one should not look for ulterior reasons for them. See: N.J. Richardson, Literary Criticism in the Exegetical Scholia to the Iliad, *CQ* 74 (1980) 264–287, espec. 271.

and Erinys. In a prospective view *theos* could be taken as semantically cleared—like a palimpsest—and thus rendered available for a new script:[66] *ate*, which accordingly—if not consequently—is promoted from an abstract notion into a divine figure during the process.[67]

We thus see three different agents—a more or less personal supreme god (Zeus), Fate (Moira) 'that what is destined for a person', and a personalized principle of retaliation (Erinys)—in paratactic co-operation sending the instrumental agent *ate*, which/who after meeting the other three in the central niche '*theos*' steals this predicate and the show and continues her life as a personal divine actor. All this in a few lines by one author. I could not think of a better introduction to the main theme of the present chapter.

So far we have found ourselves confronted with expressions that cover a variety of different explanatory notions on a scale stretching from unpredictable destiny, fate or chance, via an arbitrary rule of supernatural agents referred to as Zeus, the god or the gods, to a belief in the justice of a divine supreme being. We have seen these different, mutually contradictory concepts as separate elements scattered throughout archaic literature. They often prevailed in one author or one work. Once, in the Homeric passage, we saw them juxtaposed in close, hence alarming, adjacency. Things will become more complicated

---

[66] In a fascinating interpretation of Herakleitos B1, D. Sider, Word Order and Sense in Heraclitus: Fragment one and the River Fragment, in: K.J. Boudouris (ed.), *Ionian Philosophy* (Athens 1989) 363–368, in the wake of Gigon *e.a.*, argues that ἀεί does not refer *either* to the preceding *or* to what follows but does both ἀπὸ κοινοῦ. And he argues the same for another fragment. In view of Herakleitos' preference for philosophical amphibolies, he argues that this is no doubt intentional. In the case of an oral and improvised type of poetry like the Homer epics one would rather think of a spur of the moment association.

[67] To be frank, I could hardly believe this myself, when I wrote it in 1996. Years later some colleagues (see below n. 182) drew my attention to recent work on the implications of the notion 'speech' for archaic poetry (see more extensively: below p. 226 ff.). Slings 1999, espec. 23 f. made the scales fall from my eyes. Speaking on a line of words, which in a rather harsh way change their syntactical condition (from apposition to a word in the preceding line, into becoming the subject of the following one, as in Mimn. fr. 1. 1–4, including the ensuing problem of punctuation) he explains: "In spoken language, dual functionality is a perfectly normal phenomenon; it is one of the manifestations of a more general trait of spoken language: a speaker starts a clause complex in a certain way, and half-way through it, given the fallibility of human memory, he changes course and ends in a different way. (….) Human memory is fallible." This is directly relevant to the exactly similar text- (rather: speech-) constitution under discussion.

in a few celebrated passages of two authors, Herodotus and Solon, to which we shall now turn.

We also have detected a first glimpse of the cultural-rhetorical setting that may, if not explain the semantics, then at least provide an insight into the possible origins and background of the alarming concatenation of such conflicting representations. After analysis and discussion of each of the following passages, we will step by step continue our enquiry into the socio-cultural embedding of the different expressions and so hope to advance our insight into the enigmas that we shall encounter.

3. Herodotus

1. *Two tales, many perspectives*

Two famous *logoi* (episodes) of Herodotus' *Historiai* display a strong thematical and structural likeness, namely the story of Polykrates' attempt to prevent his inescapable downfall in 3.40–43, and a set of even more celebrated, interrelated passages concerning the life of Croesus, namely the story of Solon's lesson to Croesus (1.32–34) and the account and interpretation of Croesus' downfall (1.86–91).

Both stories take their point of departure in the deep-rooted Greek conviction, typical of Herodotus in particular, that excessive luck, wealth, or power is inevitably followed by an (often sudden and unexpected) 'catastrophe' in the twofold sense of reversal/upheaval and ruin/downfall. The explanations of inescapable doom scattered over these passages are articulated in a great variety of divergent expressions, which will be cited in the order of their entry in the narratives. Such a comprehensive survey may seem pedantic, even superfluous, and perhaps for that reason will not be easy to find in earlier studies. Yet, to my mind it is an indisputable prerequisite for conducting a scholarly analysis. One reason is to avoid the often unconscious preliminary decision to ignore some expressions as having less emphasis, being 'unmarked' or otherwise semantically less dominant, and hence to exclude them from the discussion. Another reason is that nearly all the explanations collected in my survey also return in other passages of Herodotus and that all of them can be attested in other authors, especially those of the archaic period, but with one exception never in such a dense accumulation and rapid succession. The only exception is Solon's so-called Hymn to the Muses, which will also be discussed.

The two Herodotean *logoi* share three themes: an expected or realized catastrophe, attempts to account for it, and the central role of excessive luck as apparent from wealth or power. They also share the motif of a 'tragic warner', whose task it is to express his concern about the imminent vicissitudes of the excessively fortunate protagonist, and who may even offer a suggestion for escaping the impending doom. In both stories the warner fails, indeed in accordance with the central message must fail, to sway the course of events.[68]

In the first *logos*,[69] Polykrates, the fabulously wealthy and powerful tyrant of Samos in the sixth century BC, receives a warning from his friend Amasis, king of Egypt, who is worried about his great luck because he **(1)** "knows that the divine power is envious" (τὸ θεῖον ἐπισταμένῳ ὡς ἔστι φθονερόν). Amasis himself would prefer, on behalf of his own life and that of the ones he cares for, **(2)** "to do well in some things and badly in others, passing through life with alternate success and failure, rather than to be always lucky in all respects" (τὸ μέν τι εὐτυχέειν τῶν πρηγμάτων τὸ δὲ προσπταίειν καὶ οὕτω διαφέρειν τὸν αἰῶνα ἐναλλὰξ πρήσσων ἢ εὐτυχέειν τὰ πάντα). He explains: **(3)** "I have never yet heard of a man who after an unbroken run of luck was not finally brought to complete ruin" (οὐδένα γάρ κω λόγῳ οἶδα ἀκούσας ὅστις ἐς τέλος οὐ κακῶς ἐτελεύτησε πρόρριζος, εὐτυχέων τὰ πάντα).

Polykrates is advised to redress the situation by abandoning the possession he values most, and to continue this 'mending' strategy (ἀκέο) if it does not work the first time. After serious consideration, Polykrates selects as his most precious possession his personal ring, and throws it into the sea so as to visualize and realize its irretriev-

---

[68] On the role of the warner in Herodotus: H. Bischoff, *Der Warner bei Herodot* (Marburg 1932); R. Lattimore, The Wise Adviser in Herodotus, *CPh* 34 (1939) 24–35. A poignant summary in E. Visser, Herodots Kroisos-Logos: Rezeptionssteuerung und Geschichtsphilosophie, *WJA* 24 (2000) 5–28, espec. 27: "Die Warner sollen dem Leser zeigen, wie weit sich der Protagonist von dem Gefühl einer grundsätzlichen Verunsicherung, die doch als *condicio humana* einem Menschen ständig bewußt sein müsste, entfernt hat." On 'warning' *the reader* through signals in the narratio: Cf. H. Schwabl, Gyges und Kroisos bei Herodot: Zur 'epischen' Technik von Ankündigung und Ausführung, *WS* 117 (2004) 31–68.

[69] The episode has drawn much attention and raised much discussion. Versnel 1977 discusses earlier views and proposes a new interpretation. For a different view see: J.E. van der Veen, The Lord of the Ring: Narrative Technique in Herodotus' Story on Polykrates' Ring, *Mnemosyne* 46 (1993) 433–457 = *idem*, *The Significant and the Insignificant. Five Studies in Herodotus' View of History* (Amsterdam 1996) 6–22, on which below n. 107. Cf. also D. Ogden, *The Crooked Kings of Ancient Greece* (London 1997) 119–123.

able loss. Once back home he grieves for his loss/misfortune (συμφορῇ ἐχρῆτο). Luckily *but* unfortunately, the ring returns to the tyrant in the stomach of a fish that is presented to him. Understanding that **(4)** "this is a divine affair" (θεῖον τὸ πράγμα) Polykrates writes Amasis about what has happened. The Egyptian king now understands that **(5)** "it is impossible for a man to save another man from what is destined to happen" (ὅτι ἐκκομίσαι τε ἀδύνατον εἴη ἀνθρώπῳ ἄνθρωπον ἐκ τοῦ μέλλοντος γίνεσθαι πρήγματος), once more adding that Polykrates' excessive luck and good fortune will inevitably be succeeded by reversal and doom.

We observe five different motifs put forward to illuminate the background and inescapability of the tyrant's final downfall: 1) the jealousy of the gods, 2) the necessity of steady alternation of good and bad, 3) excessive luck must in the end lead to complete ruin, 4) divine intervention, and 5) what is fated to happen cannot be changed.

With the exception of the 'jealousy of the gods' (φθόνος τῶν θεῶν), these notions, as separate thought units, are recurrent motifs in archaic Greek poetry.[70] Divine envy, often heralded as the most typically Herodotean theme,[71] did already occur sporadically in Homer e.g. *Od.* 5.118, "gods, jealous more than others" (θεοί, ζηλήμονες ἔξοχον ἄλλων), but as an explicit notion flourishes not before the later archaic period, perhaps under influence of the image of the tyrant.[72]

---

[70] See Harrison 2000, 38 ff. for the evidence. Cf. below, Ch. III n. 121.

[71] Even though the expression divine *phthonos* or its cognates occur only five times in Herodotus: twice in the passages under discussion (both times aroused by excessive prosperity); twice in the words of Artabanos, 7.10ε: divine envy as provoked by excessive fortune and 'thinking big' (haughty thoughts), and 7.46.4: the jealous god grants man only a tast of a sweet life (γλυκὺν γεύσας). Finally once in the words of Themistocles (8.109: 'thinking big'). However, the exclusive location of 'divine envy' in speeches of warning or censure may be seen as underlining its central position in Herodotus' thought. See for earlier scholarship and a convincing refutation of a recent challenge to the importance of divine envy by those who wish explicit affirmation of consent by the author (e.g. Lang 1984, 61; Waters 1985, 99, 104) see: Shapiro 1996, 352–355. Cf. Harrison 2000, 40 n. 26. This does not mean that the author's personal preference for one type of causation ousts others. See below Appendix III. On the more general question whether Herodotus himself endorsed the arguments put forward by his focalisers in the speeches, as for instance broached by Shapiro 1996, see: Harrison 2000, 38 f. and below n. 96.

[72] On earlier occurrence of envy of the gods see: J. Kroymann, Götterneid und Menschenwahn. Zur Deutung des Schicksalsbegriffs im frühgriechischen Geschichtsdenken, *Saeculum* 21 (1970) 166–179; G.J.D. Aalders, De oud-Griekse voorstelling van de afgunst der godheid, *Med. Kon. Ned. Ak. Wet.* 38 (1975) 47–65; Lloyd-Jones 1971, 55 ff.; Parker 1997, 151 n. 30. For later periods see Ch. III n. 120.

The same explanatory devices combined with others return in the other two Herodotean passages announced above, the first concerning Croesus' luck and the anxiety it provokes, the second on his downfall, linked together by the story of the tragic death of Atys.

In the first section of the Croesus *logos*[73] (1.32–34)—"focal point in the whole Croesus *logos* and one of the most important sources for Herodotus' ethical, religious, historical, and philosophical views" (Asheri 2007, 97)—the wise Athenian statesman, lawgiver and poet Solon pays a visit to the wealthiest man of his time, Croesus, king of Lydia. In his role of tragic warner and triggered by the king, who is irritated by Solon's reluctance to declare him the happiest (ὀλβιώτατος 1.30.2) man on account of his excessive 'well-being' (εὐδαιμονίη 1.32.1–2), the Athenian first tells the famous story of Kleobis and Biton and next offers a disquisition on the whims of fortune. First he notes that "the divine power is **(6a)** envious and **(6b)** disturbing" (ἐπιστάμενον με τὸ θεῖον πᾶν ἐὸν φθονερόν τε καὶ ταραχῶδες), adding that of all (26250 including the intercalated!) days[74] in a long lifetime "not a single one is like the next in what it brings," which makes **(7)** "man altogether a thing of chance" (Οὕτω ὦν πᾶν ἐστι ἄνθρωπος συμφορή).[75] There follows an exposition of various shifts caused by fortune's whims. Nobody can be called happy before the end of his life, since every day may bring a turn in the present situation. The prosperous may end up in misery, the man with moderate means may be more lucky. Nobody can enjoy a complete set of 'happifiers'.[76]

---

[73] Again a much discussed episode. No general inquiry into Herodotus' views on historical motivation can ignore it. See especially: O. Regenbogen, Die Geschichte von Solon und Krösus, *Das humanistische Gymnasium* 41 (1930) 1–20, (= Marg 1965, 375–403); M. Miller, The Herodotean Croesus, *Klio* 41 (1963) 58–94; T. Krischer, Solon und Kroisos, *WS* 77 (1964) 174–177; W. Marg, 'Selbstsicherheit' bei Herodot, in: Marg 1965, 290–301; von Fritz 1967, 217–223; H.-P. Stahl, Learning through Suffering? *YClS* 24 (1975) 1–36; Chiasson 1986. For more recent literature and a full discussion see: Shapiro 1996; Harrison 2000, 31–63; Pelling 2006. On the different stages of the historical tradition of the Croesus-Delphi *logos* see: W. Burkert, Das Ende des Kroisos. Vorstufen einer Herodoteischen Geschichtserzählung, in: *Catalepton, Festschr. B. Wyss* (Basel 1985) 4–15.

[74] One of the many testimonies that Herodotus had Solon's poems in mind: 70 years also in Solon fr. 27, 17–18. Cf. Chiasson 1986, 254 f.; Harrison 2000, 37.

[75] Literally "a human is altogether *symphora*." Man and chance are identified here. The term *symphora* tends to shift from mere 'chance' towards 'disaster'.

[76] The idea remains popular throughout antiquity. When Plutarch *De Superst.* 167 f. discusses "human experiences and actions which are linked with chance circumstances which move now in one course and now in another," he opens the passage with the

A sound mixture of good and bad is preferable, for **(8)** "Look to the end, to the final outcome. Many humans the god, after first having granted them a glimpse of happiness, has brought to utter ruin" (Σκοπέειν δὲ χρὴ παντὸς χρήματος τὴν τελευτὴν, κῇ ἀποβήσεται. Πολλοῖσι γὰρ δὴ ὑποδέξας ὄλβον ὁ θεὸς προρρίζους ἀνέτρεψε).

We recognize various themes of the Polykrates *logos*, sometimes literally, but there are differences as well. Solon mentions two different conceptions: divine envy threatening only the excessively prosperous, side by side with the vicissitude of luck (*symphora*), which should concern every human being since it works in both directions: from good to bad and in reverse, and also includes various mixtures.[77] Either of the two—divine envy and chance—often occurs as a general principle in its own right in Herodotus.[78] So this passage confronts us with two—not necessarily mutually exclusive, yet clearly distinct—explanations of sudden changes in human life, both available as autonomous traditional themes in Greek literature, but juxtaposed here in an ongoing series of arguments. So far the question of human responsibility is not hinted at in Solon's suggestions. However, we have not yet reached the end of the story.

After Solon's departure (1.34), **(9)** "Croesus was stricken by a great wrath (*nemesis*) of the god, presumably because he had deemed himself to be the happiest of men" (ἔλαβε ἐκ θεοῦ νέμεσις μεγάλη Κροῖσον, ὡς εἰκάσαι, ὅτι ἐνόμισε ἑαυτὸν εἶναι ἀνθρώπων ἁπάντων ὀλβιώτατον). This is the first (and last) time that the author personally interferes in the narrative offering his own, alternative comment on the king's misfortune. It is his assumption (ὡς εἰκάσαι) that it is not divine envy but human pride sprouting from excessive prosperity that provoked the reversal of luck as divine punishment. This mirrors

maxim: "it is the common lot of mankind not to enjoy continual good fortune in every respect."

[77] As a matter of fact it is even more complicated than this: the alternation of good luck and bad luck actually is a different argument than the varying mixture of material prosperity and physical or familial misfortune. "The contrast between the 'wealthy unhappy men' and the 'lucky men of moderate means' is forced and not consistent with the omnipotence of chance" (How and Wells *ad loc.*). I will return to several aspects of this later on.

[78] When, later, Croesus gives advice to Cyrus in 1.207, he extends the warning that "there is a cycle of human vicissitudes, and while turning around it does not allow the same persons to be fortunate all the time" (ὡς κύκλος τῶν ἀνθρωπηίων ἐστὶ πρηγμάτων, περιφερόμενος δὲ οὐκ ἐᾷ αἰεὶ τοὺς αὐτοὺς εὐτυχέειν). On the role of divine envy in Herodotus' history see: above n. 71.

the warning against 'haughty thoughts' (φρονέειν μέγα) prevailing elsewhere in Herodotus. Here for the first time an element of personal responsibility and, indeed, guilt is introduced as an explanatory device. Accordingly, the competitive notion of divine jealousy here gives way to the retributive concept of divine *nemesis*.[79]

This divine interference does not yet refer to Croesus' final downfall but to the tragic death of his son Atys brought about by an unfortunate accidental action of a guest (1.34–45). A dream-message portending this violent death makes Croesus do everything to keep his son out of danger. To no avail: he fails to "trick" (κλέψαι 3.38) his son (from death). In a prayer[80] Croesus calls Zeus to witness, complaining that the murderer of his son had been hospitably entertained in Croesus' own house due to the god's protection. Later on, however, he comforts the innocent murderer with the argument: **(10)** "This calamity is not your fault: you killed him but not on purpose. One of the gods, I suppose, is to blame, who long ago warned me of what was to happen" (Εἷς δὲ οὐ σύ μοι τοῦδε τοῦ κακοῦ αἴτιος, εἰ μὴ ὅσον ἀέκων ἐξεργάσαο, ἀλλὰ θεῶν κού τις, ὅς μοι καὶ πάλαι προεσήμαινε τὰ μέλλοντα ἔσεσθαι).

The whole passage is a paradigmatic prelude to the final act, beginning with the story of Croesus' fateful campaign against Cyrus due to his misunderstanding of the oracle of Delphic Apollo and culminating in his confrontation with the Persian king. There we perceive a sequence once more recalling that of the Polykrates *logos*: a prophecy and its misinterpretation, disaster imputed to, in this case, a *specific* god, a growing insight—here through divine instruction—about the real multiple causes of the calamity—and the insight that what is destined cannot be escaped.

This final great passage of the Croesus *logos* (1.86–91) pictures the Lydian king utterly degraded as captive and slave of the conqueror of his empire, standing in chains on a pyre to be burnt alive. This time it is Croesus' own reflections that confront us with another, more bewildering, variety of supposed causes of his destruction, partly in a direct confrontation between the human victim who lacks insight and the all-knowing god who provides it, a new protagonist on the

[79] This means that I do not agree with those who more or less identify *nemesis* with *phthonos* here. See: Shapiro 1996, 352 n. 23, and below Appendix III.

[80] Cf. above p. 73.

scene of life's enigmas. First, in his distress, Croesus realizes that it was by divine inspiration that Solon had said "that no living man was blest" (ὡς σὺν θεῷ εἰρημένον τὸ μηδίνα εἶναι τῶν ζώντων ὄλβιον). On Cyrus' request he then sets out to give an account of that meeting. First, however, the victor, realizing the instability of human affairs, repents and saves Croesus from death by fire **(11)** "changing his mind…for fear of retribution and realizing that nothing in human life was stable" (μεταγνόντα τε καὶ [….] δείσαντα τὴν τίσιν καὶ ἐπιλεξάμενον ὡς οὐδὲν εἴη τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποισι ἀσφαλέως ἔχον) and grants Croesus freedom to speak, inquiring who had incited him to launch a war against him. Croesus first of all acknowledges: **(12)** "It was I who did it and brought thereby good fortune to you and ill to myself" (ἐγὼ ταῦτα ἔπρηξα τῇ σῇ μὲν εὐδαιμονίῃ, τῇ ἐμεωυτοῦ δὲ κακοδαιμονίῃ). However, he immediately adds: **(13)** "but the cause of all this was the god of the Greeks [i.e. Apollo, whom he had honoured more than any other god with gifts and who, he thought, had treacherously promised him a victory] being the one who encouraged me to fight you" (αἴτιος δὲ τούτων ἐγένετο ὁ Ἑλλήνων θεὸς ἐπάρας ἐμὲ στρατεύεσθαι….). Only one line further, however, he says: **(14)** "It must have been the will of [the] gods, I guess, that this should happen" (Ἀλλὰ ταῦτα δαίμοσί κου φίλον ἦν οὕτω γενέσθαι).[81] And again some lines later: **(15)** "Since the gods have made me your slave" (Ἐπείτε με θεοὶ ἔδωκαν δοῦλον σοι….).[82]

Now it is Apollo's turn for some divine instruction, through the mouth of the Pythia. First he counters the allegation arguing that **(16)** "destiny is inescapable even for a god" (τὴν πεπρωμένην μοῖραν ἀδύνατά ἐστι ἀποφυγεῖν καὶ θεῷ). For **(17)**, "Croesus had to pay for a crime committed by an ancestor of the fifth generation before him" (Κροῖσος δὲ πέμπτου γονέος ἁμαρτάδα ἐξέπλησε). The god himself **(18)** "was unable to divert the Moirai from their course" (οὐκ οἷός τε

[81] Note that in this text (**14**) no fewer than three or four different means are applied to immediately generalize and as it were blur the preceding expression in **(13)**: the omission of the article, the use of the plural, perhaps the choice of the word *daimones* instead of *theoi*, and, most emphatically, the addition of the word κου, "I suppose," which reminds us of the terminology used earlier by Herodotus when he gave his own opinion. Note, too, that this is the only instance of the plural *daimones* in Herodotus' work. I cannot go into the intricate question concerning the 'exact' meaning of *daimon*, and its possible differences from *theos*.

[82] Note that in a similar situation in 1. 207 Croesus says to Cyrus: "Since Zeus gave me to you" (ἐπεί με Ζεὺς ἔδωκέ τοι).

ἐγένετο παραγαγεῖν Μοῖρας). Yet, it was due to Apollo's intercession on behalf of Croesus that the Moirai had delayed his 'punishment' for three years. Moreover, the god had saved Croesus from death by fire. After all, it was not the god's fault that Croesus had misunderstood the oracles. And so Croesus gained an insight into the real cause of his downfall and finally **(19)**: "acknowledged that the god was innocent and the fault all his own" (συνέγνω ἑωυτοῦ εἶναι τὴν ἁμαρτάδα καὶ οὐ τοῦ θεοῦ).

In this section of the Croesus *logos,* to a certain extent a reflection of the first, we again perceive a choice of considerations, which, roughly following the course of the narrative, can be summarized as follows: 1) retribution/the natural vicissitude of human life (Cyrus), 2) personal human error in a *coincidentia oppositorum* with the personal action of one individual god, 3) the will of [the] gods in general, 4) the working of predestined and inescapable fate (2x), 5) human culpability, in two different registers: a) the retributive effects of a crime committed by an ancestor, and b) the personal fault of the victim, more especially his error of judgment caused by lack of insight (2x). It is as if we are seeing Homer in a mirror: Zeus, Moira, Erinys, the god (who accomplishes everything), Ate. And with respect to the entire Solon/Cyrus episode, it is also as if we see Solon himself: most themes collected here can be traced back to his works, especially to the *Hymn to the Muses* (fr. 13),[83] as we shall discuss later in this chapter. There can hardly be any doubt about intertextuality here, nor about its recognition by the readers, even if many of the themes were ubiquitous in a wide range of archaic poetry and Herodotus created his own variations and additions.

We can now arrange the Herodotean options on causation of the fall of an extremely lucky, rich or powerful person[84] in a classified survey of motifs:

---

[83] This of course has been often recognized: K. Nawratil, Solon bei Herodot, *WS* 60 (1942) 1–8; P.W. Sage, *Solon, Croesus and the Theme of the Ideal Life* (Diss. Johns Hopkins Univ. 1985) 47–56; Chiasson 1986, with a well-argued conclusion (261): "the conceptual affinities between them (= Solon's poetry and his speeches in Herodotus) are sufficiently striking to suggest that Herodotus knew Solon's poetry well and attempted, with remarkable historical conscientiousness, to incorporate its most prominent themes into the speeches he composed for the Athenians;" Shapiro 1996. A summary of the similarities and differences in Harrison 2000, 36 ff.

[84] The theme never stopped fascinating authors and readers: Th. Wolpers (ed.), *Der Sturz des Mächtigen. Zu Struktur, Funktion und Geschichte eines literarischen Motivs* (Abh. Ak. Wiss. Göttingen, Phil.-Hist. Kl. 2000 Folge 3, nr. 234).

I. *Impersonal, universal and irreducible laws or principles, not necessarily or explicitly connected with the existence or intervention of gods or a god:*
  A) *Unpredictable and erratic (fate, chance)*:
    I.1 Predestination, fate, what is destined to happen, with emphasis on its inescapability: **5, 16, 18.**
    I.2 Man as the plaything of arbitrary chance, the whims of the day: **6b**,[85] **7.**
  B) *More or less predictable:*
    I.3 The universal law of instability and alternation of luck: **2, 11.**
    I.4 The extremely lucky or rich will *in the end* inescapably be brought to ruin (a subtheme of I.3): **3, 8.**

II. *The (arbitrary) intervention of the divine (will of a god or of "the gods")*:
    II.1 The intervention of one personal god: **10, 13.**
    II.2 "The will of the gods" as a general determining principle: **4, 14, 15.**

III. *The envy of the gods*
    The envy of the gods uniting the automatic/predictable (I.4) and the divine reactive (II.2) processes into one (divine) principle: **1, 6a.**

IV. *Human fault resulting in:*
    IV.1 Punishment for an error or a reprehensible attitude ("haughty thoughts") of the victim himself: **9, 12, 19.**
    IV.2 Substitutive retribution for an offence of another, especially of an ancestor: **17.**

2. *Modern voices: fear of diversity*

This classified survey may serve further reflection. First however, I must prepare myself for the objection that with such schemes one may fall prey to our modern bent for systematization and taxonomy and in doing so impose our principles of organization on an ancient text.[86] I should stress then that the scheme should not and does not claim to be more than an arrangement of *terms and expressions*, listed in the narrative by the author himself, and now arranged in a comprehensive set of categories that can be accepted as the greatest common denominator of each

[85] For my arguments that the element ταραχῶδες in **(6b)** belongs to this category see: Appendix III.

[86] It does no harm though to call to mind that one of the principal concerns of scholarship is the need for taxonomy. On its fundamental role and import see: J.Z. Smith, *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago 2004).

of their meanings. There hardly can be an objection to clustering *moira, to peprômenon* or *to mellon ginesthai* by subsuming them under one heading 'destiny,' or 'the predestined', when the author himself twice combines the first two in one expression and twice uses the third as a variant.[87] Nor is there anything against clustering 'the gods' and '(a) god' as semantically identical references to an anonymous divine steering of events, as they abound elsewhere in Herodotus, while accommodating references to an individual personal god, though related, in a different category.[88] The scheme is not intended to offer suggestions about conceivable interconnections expressed or intended by the author of the various motifs, for this is the subject of current scholarly debate which we shall have to broach now.

At first sight our survey suggests that, though some devices in our modern eyes may seem to be consistent with others, others are less, if at all, compatible, since one seems to exclude the other. And it is the latter category that has become the pet of modern literary criticism. As soon as feelings of uneasiness concerning the consistency in a textual unit emerge, modern readers have a range of hermeneutic strategies at their disposal to allay their misgivings and satisfy their craving for coherence. One is to try to accommodate the different options presented by the author in hierarchical layers or circles, one encompassing, entailing or specifying others. The inescapability of the predestined fate, for instance, representing an all-encompassing frame beyond which there is no beyond, may then be taken as the playground on which various other, more specified, options play their specific roles: envy of the Gods *may* be viewed as a specification of 'predestined fate', the vicissitude of life's chances as a variant expression of 'what

---

[87] Shapiro 1996, 360 n. 46, lists all 55 passages in which 'fate' occurs in various expressions including μοῖρα, μόρσιμον, πεπρωμένον, μέλλω, δεῖ, ἀνάγκη, χρή. The last three do not occur in the passages under discussion. On their specific meanings in Herodotus, see: R.V. Munson, *Ananke* in Herodotus, *JHS* 121 (2001) 30–50, espec. 30–36.

[88] The question of the meaning of, and potential differences between, these terms is in the centre of scholarly discussion. I shall pay ample attention to it in the third chapter. For the moment it should suffice to cite the lexicographical data of Powell 1938. 'God' (*theos*) in what he calls a 'monotheistic' sense occurs 37 times, of which 30 with an article and 7 without. In a polytheistic sense, referring to a specific god, 'a(n unmentioned) god' occurs 116 times; 'mentioned by name' or at least identifiable: 39; a goddess 16. In the plural, 'the gods' as a body: 68, of which 25 with article and 43 without. There is, however, a difference between 'the gods' as a comprehensive term and as a collective as I will discuss in Chapter III, where one will also find the more reliable data in François 1957. Cf. also G. Lachenaud, *Mythologies, religion et philosophie de l'histoire chez Hérodote* (Thèse Paris 1978) espec. Ch. III. 2.

has to be'. But the reverse is also conceivable: divine envy has been roused and will inescapably cause the downfall of the human target. From that moment man lives under a predestined fate. The persistent problem, however, is that in the passages under discussion the author himself unrelentingly refuses to imply his agreement with any of these unifying interpretations. He fails to offer interpretive assistance in any textual form as a glue for sticking different utterances together.

Another strategy is to ask: "Who says what to whom in which context, for what reason, with what intention and with what effects?" These are questions any interpreter ought to consider, and which narratology is helping us to think and phrase in an increasingly sophisticated fashion.[89] It is narratology, too, that urges us to keep an open eye for different perspectives and contexts, for shifts in focus and positions in the course of the narration. Especially the 'who' is essential: narrator or one of his focalisers? Different viewpoints may be represented by different characters, each arguing from a different perspective. It is remarkable, for instance, that Croesus has a penchant for blaming individual gods for his misfortune. Equally significant, however, is that this is the only type of explanatory device that the author twice explicitly rejects and replaces by one or more different explanations. Similar distinctions in the attribution of a cause of misfortune either to one individual god or to an anonymous authority such as 'the gods' or 'the daimon', as differentiated among different characters or between character and author, are of course well-known from Homer and tragedy, both generally acknowledged as models of inspiration for Herodotus' writing.[90] However, what is true is not always relevant: in both the Polykrates *logos* and the Croesus episodes it may be one single

---

[89] I may refer here to the ground breaking works of my compatriot I.J.F. de Jong, *Narrators and Focalizers: The Representation of the Story in the Iliad* (Amsterdam 1987); *A Narratological Commentary on the 'Odyssey'* (Cambridge 2001), as well as, particularly interesting for the present chapter: Aspects narratologiques des Histoires d'Hérodote, *LALIES* 19 (1999) 217–275, and her contribution to Bakker 2003.

[90] On Homer: D. Boedeker, Epic Heritage and Mythical Patterns in Herodotus, in: Bakker *e.a.* 2003, 97–116. On the tragic nature of Herodotus and the possible influence of tragedy on the author see most recently: Ch. C. Chiasson, *The Question of Tragic Influence on Herodotus* (Diss. Yale Univ. New Haven 1979); *idem*, Herodotus' Use of Attic Tragedy in the Lydian Logos, *ClAnt* 22 (2003) 5–35; J. Griffin, Herodotus and Tragedy, in: C. Dewald & J. Marincola (edd.), *The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus* (Cambridge 2006) 46–59; see especially: S. Saïd, Herodotus and Tragedy, in: Bakker *e.a.* 2002, 117–147. Recently, Sewell-Rutter 2007, Ch. 1, selects the Solon-Croesus *logos* as a chief example of how Herodotus' handling of the divine level of causation resembles the tragedians' use of it. Cf. below nn. 107 and 110.

character, including the god Apollo, that lists a variety of sometimes divergent explanatory devices.

For the moment we must conclude that we still find ourselves confronted with an odd collection of one author's divergent, sometimes incompatible, suggestions on supernatural, divine, or human causation, which all represent a truth and none of which ousts any other.

4. Saving the Author

In Appendix III the reader can find a discussion of two exemplary modern attempts to come to terms with Herodotean diversity. They exemplify the aspirations of the modern literary critic to accomplish his most glorious task: to bring to light a (mostly presented as 'the') underlying coherence of a text, its structuring principles, the connection and subordination of the literary constituents, lines of cause and effect. In sum: to make sense of the text. In doing so, many interpreters take their departure from the almost axiomatic presumption that, always and everywhere, there *is* a coherence *in our sense of that word*. It is only under heavy pressure that the most pliable among them may *momentarily* surrender and pay lip service to the theoretical possibility that it is our sense that is thus being imposed on a text which was not created according to the same principles.

Most readers, including professional readers such as scholars, says Quentin Skinner,[91] suffer from 'the strain towards congruence', which is constantly nourished by their belief in 'the myth of coherence'. The assumption that as a rule authors command stable, well-considered and consistent doctrines elicits obstinate attempts to "gain coherent views of an author's system." Consequently, "any apparent barriers (…) constituted by any apparent contradictions which the given writer's work does seem to contain, cannot be real barriers, because they cannot really be contradictions."[92] If, then, a text, a philosophical system or a

[91] Q. Skinner, Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas, *H&T* 8 (1969) 3–53. For a fundamental discussion see: J.G.A. Pocock, The History of Political Thought: A Methodological Enquiry, in: P. Laslett & W.G. Runciman (edd.), *Philosophy, Politics and Society* (Oxford 1962) 182–202. The same for biography: P. Bourdieu, L'illusion biographique, *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 62/63 (1986) 69–72. A recent discussion of the strength and weakness of the search for coherence: Th. Pollman, Coherence and Ambiguity in History, *H&T* 39 (2000) 167–180.

[92] Here Skinner refers to W. Harrison, Texts in Political Theory, *Political Studies* 3 (1955) 28–44. Cf. also Oudemans & Lardinois 1987, 43: "We live in a world in which

historical report reveals an internal contradiction or an inconsistency somewhere, then an almost scholastic conviction that the antinomy must be 'solved', at whatever cost, seems to be the inevitable result. In contrast to this, Skinner pictures the process of thinking as an "intolerable wrestle with words and their meanings". Thus "our attempts to synthesize our views may in consequence reveal conceptual disorder at least as much as coherent doctrines."

In light of our present topic, this may mean that modern readers tend to project their logical 'separative cosmology' onto a Greek multiple 'interconnected' thought pattern,[93] thus a priori precluding the possibility that ancient Greek cultural phenomena or modes of expression may not comply with *our* sense of coherence, nor obey our laws of logical consistency. In order to adjust the author's text to our expectancy strategies such as 'creative charity'[94] or 'creative interpretation'[95] have been developed and are readily exploited. In the words of George Steiner:[96]

> Mistake, incoherence and other phenomena that potentially disrupt the picture, will be explained away as due to a lack of effort or understanding on the part of the reader, who will do his utmost to make the pieces fit.

---

the demand for clear and distinct knowledge precludes the acceptance of genuine contradictions between and within categories (*coincidentiae oppositorum*) (….) Reality cannot be confused or paradoxical." One of the strategies to counter the tyranny of coherence in historical description is, in the words of H. Kellner, *Language and Historical Representation: Getting the Story Crooked* (Madison Wisc. 1989), that "what is not straight should be described crookedly."

[93] On these notions see below p. 216.

[94] The term was (re-)introduced by N.L. Wilson, Substance without Substrata, *The Review of Metaphysics* 12 (1959) 521–539 (after Augustine's *regula caritatis*). See: I. Sluiter, Metatexts and the Principle of Charity, in: P. Schmitter & M.J. van der Wal (edd.), *Metahistoriography: Theoretical and Methodological Aspects in the Historiography of Linguistics* (Münster 1979) 11–27, who ranges it among the strategies "to defend or even exaggerate and to increase the importance of their source," giving revealing examples and a bibliography. Cf. *eadem*, The Embarrassment of Imperfection: Galen's Assessment of Hippocrates' Linguistic Merits, in: Van der Eijk e.a. 1994, II, 519–535.

[95] As J. Mansfeld calls the strategy that "seeks the interpretation which, in the light of what it knows of the facts, will maximize the truth among the sentences of the corpus." J. Mansfeld, *Prolegomena. Questions to be Settled before the Study of an Author or a Text* (Leiden 1994) 26; 155 ff., following I. Hacking, *Why does Language Matter in Philosophy?* (Cambridge 1975) 146–150, espec. 148.

[96] G. Steiner, *After Babel. Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford 1992^2) 312 f. (cf. 317; 319), arguing that the translator trusts his author, assuming that the latter presents a coherent whole and that what he says makes sense.

One of these hermeneutic strategies can be viewed in action in Appendix III. There are more. Not only the apparent lack of transparent logical coherence, but also the absence of a connecting word, expression or thought whose presence the commentator needs for making his case may be mended by resorting to the concept of 'implicitness'. Ancient Greek theory of rhetoric already coined the notion of *paralipsis* (παράλειψις).[97] In recent times this device has grown into one of the favourite means to make a text 'say' what it does not say. It has been awarded hermeneutical sanction by defining its purpose in near-Joycean terms as "to grant the hearer the pleasure of finding out himself how things cohere" or to serve "poetic economy and heightening the audience's attentiveness, substituting active involvement for passive consumption."[98] As such the instrument is both unrivaled and mortally dangerous.[99] It may solve any (supposed) narrative problem at the high price of yielding fatally arbitrary and unfalsifiable results. To save author and critic, one may rebaptize this draw-back into intentional 'polyinterpretability'. As such it is immediately relevant to our issue: "Herodotus' artistic method is to lead the hearer by what he does not say as much as by what he does," thus Ch. Fornara; "Herodotus is a master in *paralipsis*," thus I. de Jong.[100] Small wonder that similar solutions conglomerate in the study of Pindar, whose notorious dearth of textual interconnection makes him an easy prey for specialists in implicitness, and where indeed its applications may be particularly appropriate.[101] As it may in Herodotus, I hasten to add,

---

[97] LSJ: παράλειψις: rhetorical figure in which a fact is designedly passed over, so that attention may be specially called to it ([Arist. *Rh.Al.*] 1434a25; 1438b6). M. Jahn, *Narratology: A Guide to Theory of Narrative* (Köln 2006) N3.3.15.

[98] Pfeijffer 1999, 25; 28.

[99] Cf. above n. 41.

[100] Fornara 1971, 61–62; De Jong in an unpublished conference paper. She fully deploys the notion in her *A Narratological Commentary on the 'Odyssey'* (Cambridge 2001) see p. XIV. See on things that Herodotus does *not* tell his readers: Immerwahr 1966, 323–326: "the work is highly organized, but in such a way that its order is not immediately apparent." On different types of Herodotean 'difficulties' and their explanations: Lachenaud *o.c.* (above n. 88) 3 f.; C. Dewald, Narrative Surface and Authorial Voice in Herodotus' Histories, *Arethusa* 20 (1987) 153.

[101] Pfeijffer 1999, 23–34, gives a clear and balanced analysis of the principle of 'implicitness' in this type of poetry, as already acknowledged in ancient (literary) criticism: Theophr. fr. 696 FHS&G (= Demetr. *Eloc.* 222); Arist. *Rhet.* 1400b.26 ff.; Quint. *Inst.Or.* 8.2.21). Convincingly, he regards its prevalence as being more true for poetry than for prose. Cf. Chr. Carey, Ethos and Pathos in Bacchylides, in: I.L. Pfeijffer & S.R. Slings (edd.), *One Hundred Years of Bacchylides. Proceedings of a Colloquium held at VU Amsterdam* (Amsterdam 1999) 17–30, on the same principle of the poet

for it is by no means my intention to begrudge the author one of his narratological instruments.

"Active involvement in finding ourselves how things cohere" is all in the game, *our* game. Literary critics of our time have not much choice, since venturing too far outside the borders of their paradigm—for, indeed, the requirement of consistency and coherence is a paradigmatic trait—might imply the risk of depriving themselves of their *raison d'être*. Occasionally, however, the 'uneducated' profane would welcome some touch of reflection on the question whether they are really reading the text *e mente auctoris* and do indeed re-evoke the meaning that the author had wished to convey, or rather impose their own late- or postmodern paradigm on the ancient literary work and thus construct a perhaps breathtakingly ingenious but nonetheless anachronistic construction of their own.[102] In this—but only in this—respect, a postmodernist statement such as "the discourse of literary or art criticism is not out to recover meaning, but to create and

---

"inviting the audience to fill the gaps" in accordance with the statement of Theophrastos (above) "not to tell the audience everything." Cf. more generally: T.K. Hubbard, *The Pindaric Mind: A Study of Logical Structure in Early Greek Poetry* (Leiden 1985). Of course, Pindar is truly different from both Homer and Herodotus. As to Homer, however, Alexarchos does apply the related principle τὸ σιωπώμενον, whereby the poet takes many things for granted, or "leaves it to his hearers to consider themselves what follows" (διδοὺς τοῖς ἀκροαταῖς καθ' ἑαυτοὺς λογίζεσθαι τὰ ἀκόλουθα). See Richardson *o.c.* (above n. 65), 271. However, especially in the case of Pindar, another question prompts itself: how would the audience react to all these deliberate gaps in a genre of poetry which itself was not very easy to understand to begin with? Relevant information from ancient sources is not encouraging. R.W. Wallace, Speech, Song and Text, Public and Private, in: Eder 1994, 199–217, discusses the testimonia (e.g. Ar. *Av* 1372: "you make even less sense then a dithyramb", and many similar complaints about the obscurity of tragic and lyric poetry) and argues concerning Aeschylus that "his texts were always unintelligible, in terms of meaning" (and cf. above Ch. I n. 228). Note that no participant of the colloquium in question uttered disagreement, but, then, all but one were historians.

[102] Just one frightening instance from the study of Juvenal. H.A. Mason, Is Juvenal a Classic? in: J.P. Sullivan (ed.), *Critical Essays in Roman Literature: Satire* (London 1963) 95, writes: "I do not see how we can hope to become literary critics of any foreign poetry without first graduating as critics of the poetry that is nearest to us. The royal road to Juvenal is through profound enjoyment of the poetry of Eliot and Pound." To be read with the trenchant criticism by K. McCabe, Was Juvenal a Structuralist? A Look at Anachronisms in Literary Criticism, *G&B* 33 (1986) 78–84, who concludes: "Those who read contemporary criticism must often believe that the critic himself wrote the work under discussion, or they would be hard pressed to account for the freedom of interpretation and absence of evidence so commonly discovered in much literary criticism today." Cf. next note.

contest it"[103] may provide a considerable, albeit momentary, respite. If pursued in this way literary criticism is indeed a relatively harmless branch of sports. The historian has no direct interest in literary fiction constructed by a modern reader from the debris of an ancient text, as long as it is acknowledged as being fiction. However, his problems begin when literary critics maintain that their readings are the ones that the author had in mind. After all one of the first tasks of the historian is precisely that: to recover what the author may have meant. It is here, then, that increasing hermeneutical sophistication hand in hand with a decreasing receptivity for the specific philosophy of life of the ancient author and his audience invites critical reflection.

In fact, students of ancient history, and historians of ancient Greek religion in particular, find themselves in a schizophrenic position. Their interests induce them to embrace the roles of both philologists and anthropologists. As a rule less versed in the sophisticated niceties of modern hermeneutics, they may not always be sufficiently aware of the fatal risk *they* run in assuming that a literary text should convey direct and unambiguous information on historical realities.[104] In order to avoid that trap, they must become literary critics, and if they do not have the time or penchant for it, at least carefully listen to their literary colleagues and accept that they go *as far as* they can in 'making sense'. Yet, as anthropologists they should never forget the very first

---

[103] D. Fowler, *Roman Constructions: Readings in Postmodern Latin* (Oxford 2000) 107. It is just a variant of the "infinite openness of the text" and its corollary "stop making sense" proclaimed by post-modern text criticism. For surveys of the earliest post-modern experiments in classical philology see: S. Kresic, *Literary Hermeneutics and Interpretation of Classical Texts* (Ottawa 1981); Benjamin 1988 (also including critical contributions). For many the starting shot was given by H.-G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen 1960, translated as *Truth and Method* [London 1981]), as for instance in his lapidary summary at pp. 145–150: "a hermeneutics that regarded understanding as the reconstruction of the original would be no more than the recovery of dead meaning. (….) The essential nature of the historical spirit does not consist in the restoration of the past, but in thoughtful mediation with contemporary life." A consistent application of this hermeneutic approach can only flourish on the ashes of historical research as I have argued in Versnel 1990, 30 ff. See for a virulent, yet balanced, criticism: C.B. McCullagh, Can Our Understanding of Old Texts be Objective?, *H&T* 30 (1991) 302–323. An exemplary critique on recent anachronistic (= deconstructive) reading and an equally exemplary return to viewing text and interpretation in their historical contexts: G. Ferrari, Hesiod's Mimetic Muses and the Strategies of Deconstruction, in: Benjamin 1988, 45–78.

[104] On which, among the great flow of relevant literature, Pelling 1997, despite my objections to certain contributions (above Ch. I n. 427; below Appendix II) is of central importance, in particular his conclusion (213–225).

law of that discipline, which is never to impose our cosmology on that of 'the other', which would equate "making sense" with "imposing commonsense."[105] They must be continuously aware that it may be *our* drive towards coherence that we are imposing on the text, a drive which the archaic author—and in the episodes under discussion Herodotus is, not only in my view, following an archaic pattern—may not have dreamt of in his philosophy. This means that they should dissuade the literary critics from going *farther* than they reasonably can.[106] Not, for instance, as far as to push their 'active involvement' vis-à-vis the author to the extent of helpfully supplementing implicit motifs such as blaming Polykrates for throwing a tiny ring and not his wife—or anything else of more girth—into the sea in order to escape

[105] As scorned by E. Leach, *Social Anthropology* (London 1982) 28. f. One of the first professional qualities a modern anthropologist is expected to acquire is, as I heard one saying: "to hear the alarm bell of suspicion ring as soon as cultural characteristics you think you perceive in your tribe betray a resemblance with those of your own culture." This overstatement is the final stage of a development that began with a renowned article by R.M. Keesing, Conventional Metaphors and Anthropological Metaphysics: The Problematic of Cultural Translation, *Journal of Anthropological Research* 41 (1985) 201–217. In it the author rang *his* alarm bell against "the dangers of over-interpretation..... (by taking) the unconnected bits and pieces (....) in what native actors do and say and to construct from them a coherent philosophy that no informants articulate themselves" (201 f.). An even more serious problem is "that the missing order supplied by the analyst may be wrong." And he illustrates this with disquieting examples. In his wake J.-P. Olivier de Sardan, La violence faite aux données, in: 'Interpréter, Sur-interpréter', *Enquête: anthropologie, histoire, sociologie* 3 (1996) 31–59, analyses five forms of methodical over-interpretation in anthropological research: the reduction to a single factor; the obsession with coherence, the significant inadequacy, the abusive generalization, the "trick" of hidden meaning. All these are exactly the issues at stake in the present chapter and this whole fascicle should be mandatory reading for the literary or historical hermeneutician. Cf. on the dangers of creating 'wholeness' also Ch. III n. 2.

[106] I am, of course, willing to accept the general principle described by H.P. Grice, Logic and Conversation, in: P. Cole & J.L. Morgan (edd.), *Speech Acts* (New York 1975) 41–58, that effective communication depends on the assumption on the part of the hearer, that what the speaker says makes sense, with the corollary that the audience of e.g. Pindar "ought to cling on to his belief that Pindar's text is coherent" (thus Pfeijffer 1999, 34, albeit with very sensible qualifications). One may even accept (though not unconditionally) N. Frye, Literary Criticism, in: J. Thorpe, (ed.), *The Aims and Methods of Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures* (New York 1963) 57–69, espec. 63: "The primary understanding of any work of literature has to be based on an assumption of its unity. *However mistaken such an assumption may prove to be,* nothing can be done unless we start with it as heuristic principle." (my italics). But this is only the beginning of the issue. One major question remaining is whether Pindar's (and Homer's and Herodotus') way of making sense or coherence is the same as ours. Cf. also P.J. Rabinowitz, Shifting Stands, Shifting Standards: Reading, Interpretation, and Literary Judgment, *Arethusa* 19 (1986) 115–134.

his destiny. Admittedly an excessive, but by no means inconceivable example.[107] Such an affront to the author!

Are Greeks, especially archaic Greeks, prototypical West-Europeans, as it is often assumed, implicitly or explicitly, not least by modern readers of Herodotus? Or are they 'desperately alien', 'exotic', 'the ultimate other', as it is dogmatically proclaimed in a special branch of recent scholarship, often including the very same modern readers? I have touched on this question in the Introduction and shall return to it. The answer I would like to suggest implies a new problem: the Greeks are both,[108] and this is the most poignant summary of the

---

[107] I confess that I made up the wife myself, but one will easily find a plenty of helpful readers' advice including that Polykrates should have given up his empire to save his life and well-being. References to stingy behaviour as the true origin of his destruction are launched in misguided attempts to at all costs make Polykrates guilty of his own fall. See for earlier attempts and their refutation: Versnel 1977, 22 ff. More recent suggestions: N. Marinatos, Wahl und Schicksal bei Herodot, *Saeculum* 33 (1984) 258–264; J.E. van der Veen, The Lord of the Ring: Narrative Technique in Herodotus' Story on Polykrates' Ring, *Mnemosyne* 46 (1993) 433–457; Shapiro 1996, 354, n. 33: "Instead of giving up his power (which is what is most dear of him) Polykrates gives up his ring." This interpretation imposes a Christianizing idea of guilt on a typically Greek tragic episode which derives its tragic meaning exactly from the fact that the tyrant does follow the advice and in this respect is *not* guilty. Where as a rule modern critics retrieve elements of moral guilt from other, quite distant, episodes of a tyrant's life (as we see it happen to Croesus in Pelling's study [below: Appendix III] and cf. below n. 115), these interpreters manage to completely ignore one of the very few direct clues ever provided by the author himself, namely that Polykrates after having abandoned his ring "grieved for his loss" (συμφορῇ ἐχρῆτο) (and why the loss of a ring can have such an emotional impact can be found in Kurke 1999, 101–110). It is as if the author wishes to make sure that his readers, all too prone to resort to *paralipsis*, this time at least will *not* go for the wrong interpretation. But these readers know better than their author. Amasis' final conclusion is 'distragedized'. What these readers do not realize is that the traditional wide-spread tale of throwing a ring that will return is built on the notion of the inescapability of destiny, and for this very reason adopted by Herodotus.

[108] One might view them as a *mundus alter et idem*, as Mercurius Britannicus (= Joseph Hall) called his book on imaginary expeditions to the antipodes. Or as 'distant companions' as my late colleague C.M.J. Sicking 1998, entitled his collective papers. The ancient Greeks represent 'das nächste Fremde', a term coined by U. Hölscher, to which Achim Gehrke referred me. See: U. Hölscher, *Das nächste Fremde. Von Texten der griechischen Frühzeit und ihrem Reflex in der Moderne* (edited by J. Latacz & M. Kraus, Munich 1994), with at p. 278: "das vorzüglich Bildende an ihnen ist nicht sowohl ihre Klassizität und 'Normalität', sondern dass uns das Eigene dort in einer anderen Möglichkeit, ja überhaupt im Stande der Möglichkeiten begegnet." This is also the most apposite legitimation of our comparing ancient and modern societies: to detect both similarities and differences, as well as to sharpen our awareness of our own western cultural categories which may distort our perceptions of other societies. See e.g. M.I. Finley in his introduction to his *The Legacy of Ancient Greece: A New Appraisal* (Oxford 1981). Diffusion, Comparison, Criticism, in: K. Raaflaub

dilemma under discussion. Unfortunately, it does very little to alleviate the desperate situation of the historian. And I am well aware that I am drawing a shamefully distorted caricature of the two positions, that the dividing lines cannot be drawn in such a rough fashion, and that the most promising work at the moment, especially on issues such as the one under discussion, is done by scholars who cannot possibly be classed exclusively in one of the categories.

Back to the texts. Feelings of uneasiness have not vanished. Doubts remain. Instead of smoothing them over we should try and make explicit what precisely is *our* problem with *their* texts. Only in this way may the differences between their and our ways of expressing things come to surface. Two of them, which have come to the fore in our earlier discussion, merit special attention. One concerns meaning, the other form. Both may hurt our sense of logic, of coherence, of consistency.

First, then, despite all ingenious, elegant and seductive attempts at overall interpretations it still is asking too much to glue together divine envy, arbitrary chance, mechanical rules of alternation, the law that the excessively fortunate will end badly, the will of the gods, predestined fate, retribution for the offence of an ancestor and personal error into one satisfactory coherent composition. Some of these options simply exclude others according to our system of logic, the basis of which—I must call to mind—we owe the Greek Aristotle. Chance—striking indiscriminately the blameless and the wicked—is incompatible with the principle of divine justice. The inescapability of fate must inescapably entail the inescapability of Croesus' error: he could never be allowed to understand the oracle correctly (and act accordingly), and hence could not be reprehended nor should he reproach himself for misinterpreting the oracle. Free choice negates predestination.[109] I am not imposing modern logic on the Greeks now—as one might be thinking—for even pre-Aristotelean Greeks might allow such tensions to surface, as Theognis for instance did in his protest prayer to Zeus. It is the stuff tragedies are built of.[110] My point is that this is

(ed.), *Anfänge politischen Denkens in der Antike* (Oldenburg 1993) 1–13. Williams 1993, 2 ff., makes it his aim to deal with both similarities and differences between the Greeks and us.

[109] The discussion, triggered by Augustine and Calvinistic theologian initiatives, has never ended and can never end.

[110] On the problem of divine arbitrariness versus justice in tragedy see fundamentally Parker 1997, who tends to highlight the element of divine justice: "The harshness

precisely what Herodotus in our passages does *not* do. He presents all options, however dissonant, as true (with the exception of Croesus' suggestions).

The second problem, closely related to the first, but so far not broached in an explicit manner in our discussion is a more formal-stylistic one. The entire debate on the (lack of) consistency in the episodes under discussion would perhaps evaporate if the texts had at least betrayed a whiff of a discursive composition in which the various different explanations that are put forward are weighed, compared and discussed in an attempt to decide which is the most satisfying one, and in which the author next either renounces, or re-interprets and reconciles the other explanations. In other words: if we could have found anything resembling discursive argumentation, as we find it in philosophical, rhetorical and partly historiographical prose, sometimes also in tragedy, *and* elsewhere in Herodotus.[111] Not, however, in the two *logoi* under discussion, except for Croesus' attribution of misfortune to the interference of one specific god.

On the contrary, as we saw, the multiple divergent and sometimes even contradictory suggestions in our texts are *not* presented

---

of the tragic gods is normally associated, if in complex ways, with considerations of justice; they are punishers and avengers, not forces of arbitrary cruelty." So does another stimulating study: E. Kearns, Order, Interaction, Authority. Ways of Looking at Greek Religion, in: A. Powell (ed.), *The Greek World* (London 1995) 511–529, with a laudable but inherently hazardous overdose of qualifications, caveats and reservations. Although she is trying as hard as possible to find a theodicy in at least some archaic authors, this is always a "qualified theodicy" (511). In Sophocles on the other hand "a mysterious, inscrutable order does indeed work in human affairs, though not necessarily to human advantage (……) There is therefore a larger structure which includes morality, to be sure, but includes also elements which may even seem to contradict a simple moral system of 'fair' rewards and punishments. Ultimately this structure subsumes, if it does not solve, the problem of the gods' injustice" (516–517). I feel most at ease with Ch. Segal, *Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles* (Cambridge MA 1981) 21: "Tragedy stresses less the unifying, synthesizing capacity of a mediator than the problematical and paradoxical status of the figure who stands at the point where opposites converge. Such a figure may assume contradictory attributes simultaneously (…) Tragedy is the form of myth which explores the ultimate of mediation by accepting the contradiction between the basic polarities that human existence confronts." For Euripidean theology see: Mastronarde 2002.

[111] Herodotus may present a choice of possible and differentiated alternatives, sometimes concluding with his own preference, sometimes leaving the question open. For instance: 6.75–84, *cf.* Gould 1994, 95 ff.; Harrison 1997, espec. 101–104. In Hdt. 8.109. 3 Themistocles on the victory at Salamis says: "it is not we who have achieved this feat but the gods and heroes, who were envious that one man should be lord over both Asia and Europe, a man who was impious and presumptuous" (ἐόντα ἀνόσιόν τε καὶ ἀτάσθαλον).

as conflicting or competing alternatives, let alone that their mutual compatibility or incompatibility is negotiated, discussed, questioned or denied. Practically without exception they are simply juxtaposed, conspicuously lacking even the faintest trace not only of helpful disjunctions such as 'or', 'yet,' or 'however', but even of conjunctions like 'and' or 'furthermore'. In other words we have here an extreme instance of asyndetic expression, invited by the (vague) connotative family resemblance of the concepts involved, but lacking comparative evaluation, distinction or equation of one with the other. As we shall discuss later, scholars of an earlier generation introduced terms such as 'paratactic style' or 'adding style', for such asyndetic accumulations. Till very recently a tendency to shun these notions may be observed in scholarly discussion, as modern literary criticism tends to prefer unity over multiplicity, assuming that these notions are irreconcilable antagonists.

Semantic discrepancy, even incongruity, among non-competitive explanatory statements on causation on the one hand; an asyndetic, paratactic fashion of presentation on the other: these are the two, in modern eyes disquieting, observations that we have found on our way. It is time to note that not every Herodotus specialist of the last decades has been equally prone to smoothing over their implications. One of the very few that took them seriously was John Gould. In several studies he paid attention to the issue, as exemplarily in Gould 1989, 78–85, where with reference to the Croesus *logos*, he writes (79):

> Closer inspection suggests that we are not dealing with the sort of unified and structured set of ideas that we are entitled to call a theory, but rather with a set of metaphors of very different implications, (….) the different explanatory generalizations, each containing a truth, which though each pretending to give a general explanation, when juxtaposed in one context, may provide contrasting and even mutually exclusive 'solutions'.[112]

Borrowing a term from cultural anthropology he refers to this phenomenon as 'luxuriant multiplicity'.[113] More recently Tom Harrison went over the same issue in greater detail. After a discussion of all

---

[112] With striking examples. Like Dodds, he *en passant* refers to these generalizing explanations as *gnomai* and maxims. We shall return to this below.

[113] I. Lewis, *Social Anthropology in Perspective* (Harmondsworth 1976) 72–77, summarizing E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford 1957).

relevant passages in Herodotus he concludes: "untidiness, inconsistency, contradiction are the glue by which Herodotus' religious beliefs hold together."[114]

Such verdicts, even if sustained by a thorough analysis of all relevant texts, are unpalatable to a major strand of modern Herodotus specialists. Various reviews of Harrison's book, apart from detailing justified critique of textual interpretation, betray undisguised airings of indignation at what the authors apparently feel as an affront to 'their author' and are markedly hostile in tone.

More generously, Pelling 2006, 148 n. 25 admits: "I do not wholly disagree here with the trenchant remarks with which Harrison 2000, 39–40, criticizes the drawing of fine distinctions in interpreting Solon's words, though his approach to Herodotus' narrative technique is different from mine." This is about the most elegant way to circumvent saying: "I fundamentally disagree with him." The truth is that the two scholars *cannot* agree since, as we will discuss in Appendix III, Pelling belongs to that trend of Herodotus interpretation which Harrison 2000, 1, has in mind when he opens his book with the phrase: "Herodotus has been growing increasingly ingenious in recent years," and p. 7: "Herodotus was possessed of so much ingenuity that he knew how not to show it." In that quality Pelling as well as any other of his like-minded colleagues can never accept the consequences of Harrison's criticism without forsaking the critic's supreme goal, namely to make sense of the ancient text in accordance with our current paradigmatic standards.

My own conclusion from these preliminary observations is that, at the very least they should make us hesitant about making an unconditional surrender to the late modern fashion of 'interpretive charity' towards our author by trying to save him at all costs from the one mortal sin in academia, lack of coherence or consistency (*our* consistency), and hence forcibly accommodating him under the shelter of our own modern cosmology.[115] Instead, as earlier in Ch. I,

---

[114] Harrison 1997, 112; cf. *ibid.* 101: "Herodotus' beliefs…cannot be reduced to any single coherent plan (….) it is precisely the inconsistencies and contradictions in his beliefs which allow them to serve as a flexible means for the explanation of events." *Idem* 2000, 116: "Herodotus' religious thought is simply too untidy, too responsive, too live, too far from being a simple creed or set of dogmas (….), for us to be able to describe his beliefs as 'theories'."

[115] This is most conspicuously the case in the interpretations that seeks at all cost to make Polykrates and Croesus guilty of their own fall, of which I mentioned one

I would now recommend we take to heart the maxim of Jonathan Z. Smith: "The historian's task is to complicate, not to clarify."[116] It is the most pregnant—and extravagant—expression of my conviction that smoothing over the 'irregularities' and curbing or even eliminating the paradoxes and inconsistencies in our texts is the most guaranteed method of thoroughly wiping out the very cultural signifiers that—if questioned without modern bias—may yield up a profoundly revealing message. My pursuit of complication will, I hope, further clarify my position. Here is Solon again.

5. Solon Again

The amount of scholarly literature on Solon's so-called *Hymn to the Muses*[117]—created some 150 years before Herodotus' *Histories*—is

---

instance above (n. 107). The most common one in the present case is to seek the actual cause of the tyrants' downfall in their criminal, cruel and ruthless acts as described *in other sections* of their history. So e.g. R. Bichler, in his review of Harrison's book *Klio* 85 (2003) 222 ff.: "Harrison übersieht.... dass alle drei Eroberer (Kroisos, Polykrates, Xerxes) bereits durch persönliche Schuld schwer belastet die historische Bühne betreten." This is an exemplary instance of how an implied appeal to *paralipsis* or τὸ σιωπώμενον may go off the rail: in all three episodes Herodotus, through the mouth of his characters, cannot stop listing all kinds of (super)natural or divine kinds of causation, without *even once* hinting at the personal crimes, which indeed are described *elsewhere*. In Bichler's view, however, the reader is supposed to apply 'interpretive charity' here and kindly help the author by excavating what he deliberately must have left hidden. In my view the author did not refer to these testimonies of the victim's reprehensible behaviour because they were not relevant here and indeed would spoil his real message, for which he needed this bewildering multiplicity of options and viewpoints (not even including another element of *actual* personal guilt: haughty thoughts). Cf. Pötscher 1958, 26: "Nicht die Hybris allein bringt die Veränderung; sie kommt auch von selbst und wir suchen vergeblich, sie immer in den Kosmos unseres Denkens einzuordnen."

[116] Years after his publication I asked the great 'J.Z.' whether he would still formulate it in the same way. He denied that, substituting a rather more tame revisionary text, which unconsciously I must have chosen to forget (I guess it may have been "not to simplify"). So here is another and more directly relevant utterance: "Nicht Reduktion, sondern die Komplexität, Mehrdeutigkeit und manchmal auch Sinnlosigkeit und Widersprüchlichkeit gewachsener oder von außen in neue Kontexte eingeführter Tradition zu beschreiben, ist Aufgabe des Religionshistorikers" (Chr. Auffarth, Feste als Medium antiker Religionen: Methodische Konzeptionen zur Erforschung komplexer Rituale, in: Chr. Batsch e.a. [edd.], *Zwischen Krise und Alltag. Antike Religionen im Mittelmeerraum* [Stuttgart 1999] 31–42, espec. 36 f.). Or, more lapidarily, in the words of the father of fractal geometry Benoît Mandelbrot: "To simplify first complexify."

[117] Fr. 1 (B. Gentili & C. Prato, *Poetarum elegiacorum testimonia et fragmenta* I [Leipzig 1988²]); Fr. 13 (M.L. West, *Iambi et elegi Graeci ante Alexandrum cantati* [Oxford 1989–1992²], whose numeration I follow). For Noussia see below n. 126.

frightening. In a survey article of 1983, G. Maurach presented a very useful survey and discussion of thirty studies, including a detailed thematical analysis of the poem.[118] In 1992, H.G. Nesselrath did the same for the ensuing decade, with another six articles.[119] Since then, the stream of papers on the thirteenth elegy seems to have been running dry, but the poem continues to play a major role in studies of Solon's political, moral and poetical stance.[120] With few exceptions studies of the elegy focus on, or at least cannot avoid, two central issues: sense and coherence. As to the first, in Maurach's view the theme of the warning against avarice and excessive wealth had won the field as being the author's central (albeit not exclusive) concern.[121] This does not seem to have radically changed since. Indeed, the poem's structure is decisive on this point: its beginning and ending treat the theme of human craving for wealth and material prosperity, albeit from different perspectives.

The question of coherence however has been, still is, and no doubt will continue to be an inexhaustible source of dispute. A linear reading of the text—and in what other way than linear would one read a poem (an archaic Greek poem in particular)?—exposes the central problem. Here is a rapid survey of the successive themes of the elegy:

---

[118] A. Spira, Solons Musenelegie, in: *Gnomosyne. Menschliches Denken und Handeln in der frühgriechischen Literatur. Festschr. W. Marg zum 70. Geburtstag* (Munich 1981) 177–196, provides a less comprehensive survey with a focus on earlier views on the poem's unity and purpose.

[119] In order not to overburden my bibliography I will refer to authors discussed in these two survey papers with names and dates as there given.

[120] On K. Matthiessen, Solons Musenelegie und die Entwicklung des griechischen Rechtsdenkens, *Gymnasium* 101 (1994) 385–407, see below n. 134. Sicking 1998 originated as "Solon's 'Muzenhymne'," *Lampas* 17 (1984) 290–300, which no, doubt due to the language, had largely escaped attention. Monographs containing treatments of the elegy include: R.K. Balot, *Greed and Injustice in Classical Athens* (Princeton 2001), Ch. 3, 'Solonian Athens' pp. 58–98, espec. 79–98, with only few references to the 13th elegy. On Lewis 2006, Ch. 5: "'Moira brings good and evil': *Bios* and the Failure of *Dikê*," see below n. 136. Important commentaries: C. Mülke, *Solons politische Elegien und Iamben (Fr. 1–13; 32–37 West)* (Leipzig 2002); M. Noussia, *Solone. Frammenti del' opera poetica* (Milano 2001), with a clear, brief introduction into the different interpretations followed by her own as elaborated in her commentary, which, at many points, I endorse. Noussia-Fantuzzi 2010 appeared when the present book was already in print.

[121] On the inherent paraenetic nature of the poem e.g.: Büchner 1959; Spira 1981, in symposiastic context. E. Irwin, *Solon and Early Greek Poetry: The Politics of Exhortation* (Cambridge 2005), despite her focus on the paraenetic aspects of Solon's poetry does not pay specific attention to Fr. 13.

I *1–13 Good or bad wealth and the consequences.*
Wealth righteously begotten I do wish to possess and good fame, for wealth given by the gods is stable. Ill-gotten wealth (through acts of *hubris*), on the other hand, is hounded by *dike*. Soon *ate* gets involved.[122]

II *14–32 The modalities of divine punishment.*
Excursus on the growth of *ate*. Beginning as a tiny spark, it ends up as a big mischief. Such is the vengeance of Zeus (Ζηνὸς τίσις). Zeus sees every iniquity and, never losing sight of the end (τέλος), punishes one person immediately, another after some time. Some people themselves flee and escape the θεῶν μοῖρα, yet in the end it will come and innocent people (ἀναίτιοι), their children or posterity, will pay.

III *33–70 Frustrated hope, the futility of human endeavour, the arbitrariness of fate, the instability of good and bad luck.*
Human hope is vain. It is stupid to rely on high expectations. Everybody follows his own ambition and quest (σπεύδει δ' ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος), but often the contrary of what one pursues happens. The results of medicine for instance are unpredictable: sometimes it works, sometimes it makes things worse.

All this is expressed in the following general observations:

1) (A prophet sees the mischief coming and the gods are witnesses, but) no ominous bird nor sacrifice can ward off what is destined to be (τὰ δὲ μόρσιμα πάντως οὔτε τις οἰωνὸς ῥύσεται οὔθ' ἱερά) [55 f.]
2) Fate brings mortals both good and evil (Μοῖρα δέ τοι θνητοῖσι κακὸν φέρει ἠδὲ καὶ ἐσθλόν) [63]
3) The gifts of the immortal gods are inescapable (δῶρα δ'ἄφυκτα θεῶν γίγνεται ἀθανάτων) [64]
4) There is always a risk in every enterprise: nobody knows how things will go once he has started a job (πᾶσι δέ τοι κίνδυνος ἐπ' ἔργμασιν, οὐδέ τις οἶδεν πῆι μέλλει σχήσειν χρήματος ἀρχομένου) [65–6]
5) This section ends with the remarkable statement: "He who tries to act correctly may, through lack of providence, fall upon big and grievous *ate*; but the one who takes a wrong action: god may grant him good luck (συντυχίην) in every respect, an escape from folly" [67–70].

IV *71–76 Undifferentiated wealth and its consequences*
Wealth knows no limits. Whoever has property wants it doubled. Who could satiate everybody? The gods have given mortals the opportunity to make profit, from it *ate* comes forth. Whenever Zeus sends *ate* as punishment, people suffer from it, one now, another next.

---

[122] On *ate* in Solon see: H. Roisman, Ate and Its Meaning in the Elegies of Solon, *GB* 11 (1984) 21–27.

Divergent interpretations and assessments of the poem are on lavish display on a gliding scale between two extreme positions.

In the middle one finds a majority of scholars of different cast who all acknowledge that the poem, albeit consisting of a number of smaller subsections,[123] displays two clearly distinct themes. Part **I** with its emphatic differentiation between good and bad wealth leads naturally to **II** the righteous punishment of unjust behavior. Misfortune here is regarded as a result of human guilt: "Unrecht Gut gedeiht nicht" (v. Wilamowitz). Then, at l. 33, there is a harsh caesura, for part **III** is entirely devoid of moral reflection or causation. All of a sudden, both prosperity and misfortune are *not* the effects of human action but of superhuman principles of chance, vicissitude and luck or misfortune. No human being knows at the beginning what the outcome will be. **IV** finally, returns to the notion of wealth, but it is far from being a perfect circle, for this time there is no differentiation between good wealth which in part **I** was defined as stable, and ill-begotten wealth which was sure to attract *ate* and, consequently, divine punishment. This time it is wealth *as such* that unavoidably entails disaster due to the unlimited greed that it evokes in man. The two basic contrastive—indeed incompatible—themes in the poem, then, are the righteous divine punishment of human unjust behavior on the one hand, and the arbitrary forces of fate or chance that are beyond human influence and make the course of human life unforeseeable, on the other.

At both ends of the hermeneutic scale one finds extreme alternatives. One is the conviction that the poem lacks anything resembling transparent coherence. Its structure can be described as a chain of considerations with more or less independent status, but in which the poet was less guided by the wish to achieve a goal he set himself in advance than by the associations each subsequent idea evoked in him. Especially among scholars of an earlier generation this was seen as a typical archaic trait of language and thought. Consequently, one may find the poem being censured for its careless composition and style. Fränkel's (1973, 236) judgment "Solon's ideas are consistent to

[123] As for instance Maurach's (26) four "Handlungsstrukturen": 1) Hybris zieht *dike, ate* nach sich; 2) undistanzierte Erfolgsantizipation "wiegt leicht" (und ist schmerzhaften Misserfolg ausgesetzt; 3) alles Handeln ist als zukunftbezogenes unprognostifierbar (und dem uns unberechenbaren Zugriff der Moira ausgesetzt; 4) gieriges Geldraffen zieht Zeus' Vergeltung nach sich." He emphasizes as a general characteristic of the poem: "es geht darum was im Menschen vorgeht und weniger die Seite der Moira, der Götter, und Zeus also die Seite der 'Theologie'."

a degree, but only to a degree" is clement as compared with others.[124] Recently, D.E. Gerber,[125] still writes: "Fr. 13 is of poorer quality (i.e. as opposed to his other fragments). Because of its lack of cohesiveness it has generated a considerable bibliography." This lack of cohesiveness has even seduced scholars to rigorously split up the poem in parts, some of which may then be ousted as non authentic.[126]

At the other end of the scale one finds attempts to detect unity at all costs. Here in particular the scale's 'gliding' nature comes into view: some scholars of the middle group, though acknowledging a division in the poem, cannot resist the lure of unification. Complying with what they consider the supreme task of the philological craft,[127] they work miracles in their attempts to salvage *their* coherence from the wreck of the poem's inconsistency. This they do sometimes, just as we have seen in the discussion on the Herodotean Solon *logos*, with some, never with complete success. To be sure there are some obvious implicit links. The penalty executed on an innocent posterity as mentioned in line 31 f. self-evidently evokes the inference that nobody, neither the guilty nor the innocent, can be sure about his own future. As such these lines may be regarded as both the poem's pivoting point and the lifebuoy of its coherence. Also the ring composition in which the

---

[124] He adds: "Anyone who looks for discrepancies, imperfect logic, and new questions provoked by his answers to the old, will find them in abundance. Solon does not construct a consistent general theory, for he is not a true philosopher." Cf. Wilamowitz 1913, 257: "Es kommt darauf an, Gedanken, die in verschiedenem Verhältnis stehen, richtig zu verbinden, während Solon sie einfach coördineert hat." The problem with Solon is: "dass die Fähigkeit zu denken der Ausdrucksfähigkeit weit voraus ist." Lattimore 1947, 161–179 descries a self-generating series of ideas with no subject: "sections are fast at one end, free at the other." So, too, but in a particular way, Van Groningen 1958, 94 ff. Cf. West 1974, 181: "a rather rambling train of thought;" Knox 1985, 148: "the structure is loose and the sequence of thought muddy: the style is careless."

[125] *Greek Elegic Poetry* (Loeb 1999) 6.

[126] Perrotta 1924; G. Puccioni, in a review of A. Masaracchia, *Solone* (Firenze 1958) in: *A&R* 2 (1957) 117 ff. Hommel 1964 explains the harsh clash between the two sections as the result of a conflation by Stobaeus or a predecessor of two separate poems of Solon. The section of ll. 33–76, with its traditional pessimism and belief in fate would stem from the poet's youth, the first part, with the belief in divine justice, was written by the mature Solon. Cf. below n. 134.

[127] Fränkel 1955, 51: "Die verhältnismässige Unabhängigkeit der einzelnen Stoffpartikeln kann zu einer Überwältigung des schwachen und widerstandslosen Dichters durch die Fülle der vielspältigen Wirklichkeiten führen; andrerseits kann die Reihung seine Auffassung und Phantasie anregen und leiten, gerade das Gleichartige und Zusammengehörige in Darstellungsketten zu schildern, *oder auch in schweifender Kühnheit die geheimen Verbindungen zwischen den verschiedenen Bereichen des Daseins aufzudecken.*" (my italics)

precariousness of the craving for wealth appears both in the beginning and at the end may be a sign of a unifying strategy.[128] But this does not necessarily imply a holistic preconceived composition. Coherence can also be a result of gradual shifts in the train of thought during the process of creation.

In other respects the text is less than co-operative in providing clues for a smooth and unhampered reading.[129] However, this precisely constitutes the challenge which is the *raison d'être* of modern (*pre*-postmodernist) literary criticism. Inspired by the opening of the poem scholars have set out to detect an underlying theme of divine justice throughout the poem, even in the second part where the theme of righteous punishment has totally evaporated to make way for a focus on human lack of insight and helplessness in a world that is ruled by arbitrary Moira. The major strategy, sometimes referred to with the term *pantisis* ("all [is] punishment"), amounts to redefining the human frailties in lines 33–62, such as (vain) hope and arduous striving with unforeseeable (mostly disappointing) results, as a manifestation of human *hybris*. By first taking them as testimonies of human short-sightedness and extravagant optimism, and next reinterpreting this as a reprehensible lack of moderation, the way is paved for the conclusion that human frailty entails divine retribution.

This approach mirrors the one we have seen in our discussion of the Herodotean episodes; in the background is the same (mistaken) conviction that in the end misfortune must be a consequence of man's own failure,[130] even if the actual text is totally devoid of relevant

---

[128] "An interpretation that does not expressly take into account these characteristics of beginning and end can hardly be correct" (Sicking 1998, 9).

[129] Fränkel 1973, 234 again, "For long stretches the language of the elegy is flowing and lucid; but occasionally there are difficult and obscure passages, and sometimes the connection between the parts is not plain."

[130] So already Reinhardt 1916, who united both punishment for unjust behaviour and retribution for natural short-sightedness, under the label 'Schuldigwerden'. Römisch 1933, 34: "Menschliches Unglück ist Folge von Fehlwissen;" Fränkel 1950, 272: "immer wollen wir zuviel (….) Nur durch Ruhe und Mässigung können wir den circulus vitiosus brechen;" Sira 1981, 189: "Solon sieht […] jedes Verderben als Götterstrafe." Three of the six authors discussed by Nesselrath (Dalfen 1974; Eisenberger 1984; Christes 1986) follow the same strategy in that: "sie die bis zum Ende des ersten Teils über die göttliche Vergeltung entwickelten Gedanken auch auf den zweiten Teil konsequent anzuwenden versuchen (…). Menschliches Leid und menschliches Scheitern seien sozusagen die Quittung für frevlerisches Vergehen, das sich diese Menschen entweder selbst oder jedenfalls ihre Vorfahren hätten zuschulden kommen lassen" (Nesselrath 92).

corroborative hints.[131] In its most appalling excrescences this theory takes us to the extreme end of the scale: "Alles Leid ist *immer* gottgesandte Strafe (…) für gottgesandte Schuld" (my italics), says Müller 1956, 51, arguing that the good man who suffers bad luck is privileged because in this way he can more easily resist the enticement of success ("die Verlockung des Erfolgs"), an interpretation so absurd that its cradle must be sought in the Christian tradition of theodicy, where we find closely similar saving strategies.[132] An alternative unifying strategy is to take the second part of the poem, with its warning of the futility of all human efforts, as hosting the central idea. Maurach p. 24, for instance, sees as *Leitmotiv* of the whole poem the distinction between "menschliches Wähnen und göttlicher Klarsicht" (human illusion versus divine clear vision),[133] although the first part has not much to support to it.

It is impossible to go into all ingenious (and divergent) arguments launched to reconcile the poem's two inconsonant themes either by putting them under the umbrella of an 'all is *tisis*' idea or by assuming another comprehensive binding theme. Nor is it necessary. Many scholars, including Maurach and Nesselrath, have advanced strong counterarguments. No 'unitarian' can circumvent the problem raised by the sharp caesura in lines 33 ff. The one who tries to bridge this cleft by interpreting 33–66 as a perseveration of the foregoing lines by

---

[131] Sicking 1998, 12, describes "the six examples of the human tendency to commit oneself to the goals one has in mind" some lines later as "the false certainty of people who vainly try to escape misfortune." This, however already verges on overinterpretation in clearing the way toward *reprehensible* human error. The text nowhere implies that they try to escape misfortune. It says only that they are trying to make some fortune. Maurach 23, hits the mark when he argues that with regard to the six types of occupation of lines 43–58, the text gives no hint of censure ("Kein Tadel hörbar;" "Keine Zeile und kein Wort in 43–70 ist eindeutig tadelnd "[24]). The general theme here is the uncertainty of the outcome, which, however is not under the regime of Zeus' righteous punishment but of arbitrary Moira (63), here identified with 'the gods' as a comprehensive notion that cannot be identified with the personal Zeus who wields justice in 17 and again in 75. Neither is lack of 'wise measure' a central idea, least of all if explained as another cause for divine punishment.

[132] See below p. 236. Pötscher 1987, too, notes that side by side with divine punishment there is also room for divine mercy ("Gnade") which may even fall upon criminals ("was für Solon entschieden zu christlich gedacht scheint," so rightly Nesselrath 93). Maurach 24 (in the wake of others) speaking on these lines, gives a decisive and indeed inexorable verdict: "An 'Schuld' ist nicht gedacht; würde man 69 f. ethisch verstehen, ergäbe sich Absurdes: der Böse wurde belohnt."

[133] Of course, earlier scholars already have focused on this opposition between human weakness and divine insight. More recently, Sicking 1998, 12, too, puts the contrast between man and the gods in the limelight.

way of reflection on the consequences of the idea that the 'children pay for parents' guilt' idea, runs up against another problem. The passage that lists the examples of vain human effort has lost any connection whatsoever with the notion of divine justice. What it does offer is an independent 'philosophy of life'. Decisive, however, are the lines that conclude this passage: 63 f. and 67–70.

> Μοῖρα δέ τοι θνητοῖσι κακὸν φέρει ἠδὲ καὶ ἐσθλόν,
> δῶρα δ' ἄφυκτα θεῶν γίγνεται ἀθανάτων
> (Fate brings good and ill to mortals
> and the gifts of the gods are inescapable).
>
> He who tries to act correctly may, through lack of providence,
> fall upon big and grievous *ate*,
> but the one who acts badly: god may grant him
> good luck (συντυχίην) in every respect, an escape from folly.

Being the conclusion of the section on the vanity of human hope and effort, these lines undeniably conform to the notion of arbitrary fate and chance that imbues this passage. As these lines defy any interpretation in a perspective of divine justice, the 'unitarians' must either ignore them or downplay their impact, or try out an explanation, which, as in the case of the grotesque solution of Müller just quoted, is bound to fail.

All this leaves us with only one alternative approach, which is both more promising and, as we will discuss later on, more in accordance with the nature of archaic poetry. That is to take into full account the poem's ongoing flow of thoughts, consistently and rigorously reading it in a strictly linear way, a course of action which many scholars embrace but which only few succeed to sustain consistently and impartially: "soon *ate* gets involved". Such a rigorously linear analysis will inevitably disclose the poem's dual structure, but instead of disappointment about its regrettable (hence debated) segmentation, it may yield a fresh appreciation of the gradual (or intermittent) shift in the author's train of thought.[134] The two recent studies in which I found

[134] Following this hermeneutic principle one still may end up with one global general theme, as for instance Allen 1949 does, who sees the poem as one extended prayer for wisdom. Nesselrath, who explicitly advocates this approach, sees the second part as an expanding way of looking on human vicissitudes, which transcends the rather black-white juridical vision of the first. Yet surprisingly he ends up with the same *pantisis* idea that he forcefully opposed in the beginning: "Nach dieser erweiterten Betrachtungsweise macht sich der Mensch offenbar nicht nur dann schuldig,

this approach most exemplarily represented share the idea that the second part should be seen as an 'afterthought' which indeed conceptually interferes with the first. This interpretation, however, does nothing to detract from the poem's quality. If there is unity in the poem it is a dialectical one.

Sicking 1998 sees in ll. 37–62 an elaboration of the idea that Zeus, unlike mortals, watches over the *telos* as contrasted with the vain optimism of mortals. He fully acknowledges that 63–70 mark a decisive change: the main contrast with the naivety of human optimism is no longer the power of the gods, who see to it that the final result will be in harmony with δίκη (28–32). The conclusion to be drawn from the series of examples is that, in spite of human effort, in the last instance, it is Moira who distributes good and bad. There is a gradual shift from the idea that gods as guardians of δίκη will always have the last word in their wielding of justice towards the statement that the outcome of *everything* is uncertain. The crucial lines 67–70 imply that the fall of the one with good intentions and the good fortune of the bad may reflect the intention of the gods. This leaves us very far removed from the more straightforward confidence expressed earlier that malefactors can at best temporarily escape repayment because gods take their time. The return to the topic of wealth and its new modifications must be seen in the light of the immediate foregoing considerations. And Sicking summarizes:

> The belief that being struck by ἄτη is to be seen as Zeus' way of exacting τίσις has been saved, but as opposed to what Solon said before he started his development of the σπεύδει ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος motif, he now says that ἄτη may strike *all*.

Sicking argues for a gradual shift in the course of Solon's argument, and concludes that Solon's way of reasoning may be characterized as a kind of dialectics, reconsidering and deepening the initial idea time and again, and contrasting it with its opposite, until finally the initial belief, which, at the time, may have seemed a truism, has been shown

---

wenn er moralisch eindeutig schlechte Handlungen begeht, sondern auch dann, wenn er—ohne an seine Grenzen zu denken—sich mehr zutraut als er sich zutrauen dürfte." Likewise Matthiessen *o.c.* (above n. 120, a rejoinder to Hommel's 1964 separative approach), while recognizing the decisive change in lines 63 ff., yet in his defence of the poem's unity in its focus on divine justice smoothes over its basic import and consequences.

to be much less obvious and more problematic than it seemed to be.[135] The confident statement with which Solon started the poem is both modified by and enriched with the results of an unprejudiced observation of human behaviour—the price to be paid being a substantial part of the initial transparency and certainty.

This, to my mind, is as far as one can go in trying to detect unity in the poem. Naturally, many a single observation had already been suggested by earlier scholars. However, the stringent linear reading entailing a both merciless *and* constructive recognition of inconsistencies and indeed of *the* central inconsistency in the poem renders Sicking's interpretation refreshingly convincing. My appreciation of its approach may excuse the extensiveness of my rendition, which, naturally, I could not decently have done without first giving a review of other, less attractive, current approaches. Nor is Sicking the only one following this line of interpretation. While preserving both the sharp division and the authenticity of the poem, Lewis 2006 more recently adopted a comparable course in assessing the poem. He argues that the latter part of the elegy betrays Solon's pessimistic worldview on man as a helpless *individual*, at the mercy of inscrutable forces beyond his comprehension, responsibility and sphere of influence. As such it modifies the more optimistic tenor of the first part which addresses the *community* of the *polis*, seen as a cohesive whole, a "moral *kosmos* ordered by *dikê* (p. 59), as in so many other of his verses.[136]

Altogether, in Fr. 13 we recover in Solon's own words the very same luxurious multiplicity that guided Herodotus in the episodes we discussed earlier. Indeed, the variety of different options in the elegy closely corresponds with the Herodotean list that we have drawn above. All four categories listed there prevail in the elegy. On the one hand, there is the *external* factor, differentiated into three registers:

---

[135] This interpretation can hardly be reconciled with the view that the poem is the product of a consciously conceived composition in the strict sense of that word.

[136] This opposition is also clear from the composition of this interesting book. Chapter 4, "A Kosmos of Words: Archaic Logic and the Organisation of Poem 4," treats Solon's idealistic political and social ideas concerning the *polis*. Chapter 5 on Fr.13 with the meaningful title "'*Moira* brings good and evil'; *Bios* and the Failure of *Dikê*," (= 'Dike', 'Moira', 'Bios' and the Limits to Understanding in Solon, 13 [West], *DIKE* 3 [2000] 113–136) sketches Solon's more pessimistic views on the frailties of man as an individual mortal being. This concurs with the concession that Gerber subjoins to his negative judgment of the poem cited above: "But for all its imperfections it shows us a more reflective and philosophical Solon than we find in most of his other verses and thereby fills out a picture of the man."

(I) universal principles, both arbitrary and predictable ones: fate, chance, instability of life, (II) the arbitrary, or at least inscrutable, intervention of a god or gods: θεῶν μοῖρα, and (III) a combination of these two, here not in the form of divine envy, but as Zeus' inescapable punishment (Ζηνὸς τίσις) of reprehensible behaviour and the inescapability of *ate* striking the all too wealthy. On the other hand, there is (IV) the internal factor, the personal guilt of the human being, who is himself responsible for his own destruction, or has his offspring pay for his offense. Once more, too, we recognize the Homeric sequence: Zeus (as highest divine principle), Moira, Erinys, the god, ate.

It is as if the whole gamut of divergent options collected in archaic poetry and more especially in the Theognidean corpus has been digested into one poetical experiment.[137] Thgn. 197–208, in particular displays such striking resemblance with Solon's elegy—linking the theme of good versus bad wealth with that of children paying for their fathers' sins—that dependency is practically certain.[138]

The two observations suggested by our reading of the Herodotean passages once more force themselves upon the reader and with even more vigour. The poem consists of a chain of motifs, entirely devoid of formal conjunctive or disjunctive signals or allusions. Nor does one alternative refute prior ones in a gradual ascent towards a final and decisive conclusion. The closing idea that possession of wealth entails

---

[137] The unexpected (and worrying) theme of lines 67–70 returns in Thgn. 133–142, espec. 136 f. "Often a man who thought he was to fail succeeds, while one who thought to be successful fails." Cf. Thgn. 161–164; 661–667: "a man in penury grows quickly rich, or one who has abundant wealth loses it all within a single night; a wise man goes astray, a fool's imaginings come true; even the no-good wins respect." Cf. A. Videau-Delibes, Élégie et retournements de fortune, des archaïques grecs aux poèmes tibulliens, in: D. Conso *et alii* (edd.), *Mélanges F. Kerlouégan* (Paris 1994) 651–666. For a comparison between Solon and Theognis on the issue of justice see: G. Nagy, Theognis of Megara. The Poet as Seer, Pilot, and Revenant, *Arethusa* 15 (1982) 109–128.

[138] Thgn. 197–208: "Such wealth as comes from God by way of righteousness and free from stain, abides for ever more, but if a man acquires it wrongly (….) in the end it turns out ill; the god's design prevails. Men get misled, you see, because the Blessed ones don't punish sin upon the very act; one may pay his woeful due himself, and not leave doom suspended over dear ones, another justice never overtakes, for death too soon, uncaring, settles o'er their eyes." The latter theme returns with more clarity in 731–752 in the wish "that sinners (….) should pay the price in person, and the fathers' sins should not remain to persecute the sons; and that the bad man's sons (….) should never pay for father's trespasses." 'Dependence' does not need to have been a direct one: apparently the themes were a hot topic in the 6th century. Noussia-Fantuzzi 2010, 45–65 has a good discussion and argues that many of Theognis' ideas go back to Solon. On Thgn. 197–208 there is a thoughtful commentary (in Dutch) by E.G.P. Huijing & M. van Raalte, Theognidea 197–208, *Lampas* 14 (1981) 5–16.

pursuit of wealth and thus in itself bodes ill is not *more* true than the opening idea that evil wealth is worse than good wealth. Neither of the two rules out the other, yet the two do not convey identical messages. Not one idea in the poem rules out any other. The view that Fate brings mortals both good and evil is neither more nor less true than the conviction that divine punishment may fall on later generations. In short, there is a peaceful coexistence of the various options. Even if they are semantically incompatible, the syntactical juxtaposition of the different motifs suggests that they are non-contradictory. They are options but—at least in the texts under discussion—not open to choice: all of them are simultaneously available, but only operative *one after the other*, different expressions of a kaleidoscopic multiple representation. A melody: linear, polyphonic, fugal perhaps, but with no particular emphasis on harmony and chords.

It is time once more to turn our thoughts to what we have seen and try to reach some new line of understanding. We shall do so under a title that we borrow from our first chapter.

6. Once More: Chaos or Order?

Indeed, it is as if the clash of modern views concerning presence or absence of order in these literary texts has dropped us back into the debate of the first chapter, the one between the assumption of—and quest for—underlying and implicit structures—*kosmos*—on the one hand, and the acknowledgment of what may be seen as potential chaos in Greek religious expression on the other.

So this is the moment to venture the suggestion that especially with regard to questions of theology the early Greek way of creating order may have been in tolerating or even favouring, not in reducing, the inconsistencies that we might call chaos. The result is not necessarily 'unity *in* diversity'[139]—which of course may occur, but is easily misappropriated as a soothing expression serving to reconfiscate their experiments for our paradigm—but unity *as* diversity. In other words I am suggesting that the syntactically peaceful contiguity of semantically inconsonant explanations should not necessarily be censured as

[139] Cf. Padel 1992, 45: "What Homeric language has, abundantly, is 'unity in multiplicity'," an expression borrowed from N. Austin, *Archery at the Dark of the Moon* (Berkeley 1975) 81–107.

chaos—non-sense, hence to be adjusted in order to save the author—but may be appreciated as another type of order, that is *their* type of sense.[140] Appreciated also in terms of approval, for despite its desperate implications for what we call logic, one might value this versatile, multifaceted and multiple concatenation of explanatory devices in matters of theology and philosophy of life as an honest, challenging and perhaps even aesthetically satisfying device to live by. I will try to clarify this a bit further later on, but I must now first wind up my argument and try to show that this manner of reading archaic Greek texts is not so 'wayward' after all.

1. *Paratactic multiplicity*

First, it should be pointed out that the excrescences of our late modern strain towards coherence have emerged and come of age in mid 20th century literary criticism, particularly under the influence of 'New criticism' with its ergocentric approach and especially its 'close reading', after which it was adopted and adapted by all kinds of other modern hermeneutic trends.[141] As such it stands in stark contrast to the great discoveries concerning the complex nature of early Greek poetry in the first half of the century. Pride of place should be given to Hermann Fränkel with his pioneering article "Eine Stileigenheit der frühgriechischen Literatur,"[142] soon followed by others such as W. Aly, *Formprobleme der frühen griechischen Prosa* (Leipzig 1929), B.A. van Groningen, Paratactische Compositie in de oudste Grieksche Literatuur, *Med. Ned. Ak. Wet. Lett*. 83 (1937) 83–114, enlarged and translated as *La composition littéraire archaique grecque* (*Verhandel. Ned. Ak. Wet. Lett.* 65, no. 2 1958) as well as others, including Bowra and Verdenius. As the titles indicate the focus was very much on formal

[140] Fränkel 1955, 95 on Xenophanes: "Offenbar sehen diese Menschen, wo es irgend angeht, das Allgemeine unter der Gestalt vieler Einzelwirklichkeiten."

[141] "Very little has happened in American criticism since the innovative works of New Criticism," wrote one fellow of "the hermeneutical mafia of Yale" (thus W.H. Pritchard, The Hermeneutical Mafia or, After Strange Gods at Yale, *Hudson Review* 28 [1975–6] 601–610), P.A.M. De Man, Allegories of Reading: *Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust* (New Haven 1979) 4, and "none of the techniques of description and interpretation evolved beyond the techniques of close reading established in the thirties and the forties." See: F. Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism* (Chicago-Cambridge 1980); D. Garrick, *Praising It New: The best of the New Criticism* (Athens Ohio 2008). For the ensuing post-modern trend see above n. 103.

[142] *Nachr. Gött. Gel. Ges.* 1924 I, 63–103; II, 105–127 = Fränkel 1955, 40–96.

literary aspects, style and composition, although there were also exceptions, as for instance B.E. Perry, whose article with the telling, though not very poetic, title "The Early Greek Capacity for Viewing Things Separately" (Perry 1937) seems to be forgotten nowadays. Undeservedly so.

The fundamental discovery, then, was that archaic literature is marked by a paratactic, 'adding' or 'agglutinating' diction, entailing such qualities as abundance (ποικιλία), autonomy and predominance of separate parts, their functional equality, the linking of disparate and not seldom contradictory or incompatible parts and the (apparent?) lack of a uniting and binding central concept or theme. Fränkel 1955, 50: "einen Zwang zur Konsequenz gibt es nicht. Jedes Glied der Rede wird so bald wie möglich zu freier Selbständigkeit und zu voller Geltung erhoben."[143] Indeed:

> Paratactical arrangement often implied a minimum of cause and effect (….) or other kinds of inner coherence. Authors (….) concentrate their artistic efforts more upon the episode per se than upon the connection between one episode and another, or upon the effect of the sum total of episodes.[144]

So, according to scholars of this earlier generation, if there is a unity, it is one of parataxis not of a hypotactically constructed organic whole. In other words, if there is a whole, it has the nature of a 'dossier'. Nor is this *lexis eiromene* (λέξις εἰρομένη, 'strung-on' style, thus Aristotle)[145] restricted to poetical expression. On the contrary, in the period in which the most extravagant agglutinatory devices tend to decrease and vanish in poetry, they are a central characteristic of the Ionian philosophical and scientific products, being:

---

[143] One of the consequences is that, according to Van Groningen, early Greek compositions often seem to lack what we would call an end, or rather a completion. The author stops, but in such a manner that he can continue any moment: he is never ready, and the work is never finished (in which much against my intention not a few of my own students tended to imitate them). The work seems to be part of a larger whole, one of the most irritating consequences being that the words γάρ or ἀλλά do not always refer to the preceding text, but seem to remind us that the poem is part of a larger comprehensive—but not explicit—whole.

[144] Perry 1937, 418. Cf. *ibid.* 404: "The capacity for contemplating only one thing or one aspect of a thing or person at one time, purely for its own interest and without regard to the ulterior implications or associations that an early Greek narrator might indeed be concerned about, but often is not, and that a modern person with his more schematic habits of mind would almost inevitably bring in."

[145] See on this term and its context Bakker 1997, 36–39.

> of a gnomic kind, characterized by axiomatic statements loosely connected, expressive words, antithesis, assonance, and an accumulation of words and expressions of a similar meaning.[146]

"Dichtung *und* Philosophie," being the title of Fränkel's chef d'oeuvre, it did not last long before the triumph of parataxis over hypotaxis was detected in thought as well as in language. Bruno Snell's book "Die Entdeckung des Geistes" 1948 [1981], a collection of articles published between 1929 and 1947, definitely raised the discussion from the level of literary phenomena to that of concept, representation and thought. Snell influenced Dodds (1951), influenced Fränkel in his later work (1973)—"in fact he influenced everybody"—thus Ruth Padel in her provocative book "In and Out of the Mind," a radically critical and highly sophisticated updating of Snell's main theses. She, too, takes her departure from the basic difference between modern and archaic Greek cosmologies: "From the start, multiplicity is a core condition of consciousness, as of religion, in Greek thought."[147]

Now why do we or some or most of us, modern readers, feel embarrassed by these discoveries of a former generation to such a degree that appreciative references to them—as I found out—may disqualify a scholar as a scholar? Why are these observations almost completely relegated from the discourse of modern literary criticism?[148] The simplest—and decisive—answer of course would be that they have been proven wrong. It is obvious that in the flush of their discoveries scholars may have overplayed their hand in some respects, most

---

[146] H. Thesleff, Scientific and Technical Style in Early Greek Prose, *Arktos* 4 (1966) 89–113, espec. 90. Cf. already Fränkel 1955, 87: "Die Prosa, deren sich die Männer der Wissenschaft bedienen, zeigt den in der Poesie fast überwundenen reihenden Stil in schärfster Ausprägung." This partly contradicts Pfeijffer's 1999, 28, assumption that "the association of implicitness with the archaic age may be due to the fact that hardly any prose from that period survives," implying that this early prose would not have had such characteristics.

[147] She focusses here on a new and original issue, namely the highly complicated even inconsistent—and in her view sorely misunderstood—duplicity or multiplicity of the Greek representation of what she calls "innards."

[148] A perusal of *L'Année philologique* of the last decades shows how much work has been done lately on the social setting of lyrical poetry, on its performative functions, on the development of the lyrical ego, on the distinction or non-distinction of personal and choral lyric, and how thoroughly, on the other hand, the issues that fascinated scholars more than half a century ago have left the scene. It was only recently that I was referred to a brief, clear and balanced treatment of exactly this question and a historical description which concurs with mine in Slings 2000, for which see below p. 227 f.

conspicuously so in the case of Bruno Snell, as we have known for a long time, but—in case we might have forgotten—were reminded by Bernard Williams in his Sather lectures.[149]

Yet this is true only for a section of the material studied and scholars of different disciplines and interests still adhere to and elaborate on the early twenty century findings. Oudemans & Lardinois 1987 for instance draw our attention to the differences between modern and archaic (Greek) cosmologies, which they label 'separative' and 'interconnected' respectively:

> A separative cosmology defines and creates unity through the exclusion of paradox and coincidentia oppositorum, thus creating unity by reducing multiplicity, whereas an interconnected cosmology is defined by multiplicity weaving diversity into a texture of implicit connections, at the expense of clearness and distinctness.[150]

All this is exactly what, earlier in this chapter, I called asyndetic multiplicity.

I suggest that at least two factors are involved in the general repugnance at, and near complete suppression of, these old theories. One is again best illustrated by Snell. In his work a penchant, already visible but not nearly so explicit in his predecessors, became virulent: it is an addiction of sorts to the notion of 'not yet'. Homer was 'not yet' able to understand or isolate psychic processes as psychic processes, consequently he did 'not yet' have the appropriate words for them. Homer could 'not yet' describe a body as an organic whole. I count the term 'not yet' and its analoga no fewer than eight times in the Introduction and the first, most influential, chapter, on Homer's view of man, of the English version of the book, including an ample defense of the use of this notion on pages 15 f. In my view, here is the first main

---

[149] Williams 1993, 21–26. A survey of studies criticising Snell's point of view in: R.P. Martin, *The Language of Heroes: Speech and Performance in the Iliad* (Ithaca NY 1989) 98. The most thorough and fundamental critique appeared a year later: A. Schmitt, *Selbständigkeit und Abhängigkeit menschlichen Handelns bei Homer: Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Psychologie Homers* (Abh. Akad. Wiss. Mainz. Geist.-Sozialwiss. Kl. 1990 no. 5).

[150] In the field of discourse and reasoning, K. Peng & R.E. Nisbett, *Culture, Dialectics, and Reasoning about Contradiction* (Knoxville 1989) oppose two cultural strategies. The Chinese ways of dealing with (seeming) contradictions results in a dialectical or compromise approach, retaining basic elements of opposing perspectives by seeking a 'middle way'. European-American ways, deriving from "a lay version of Aristoteles' logic," result in a differentiation model that polarizes contradictory perspectives in an effort to determine which fact or position is correct. Cf. more generally Lloyd 1990.

cause of modern reticence. 'Not yet' inevitably implies a suggestion of primitivism. As modern literary theory had enthroned coherence as its most lauded principle, the qualification 'not yet' could not be accepted without degrading our (early) Greeks to the level of primitives. 'Not yet' and 'primitive' are precisely the two words that cannot be decently used anymore.[151]

A second problem that heavily encumbers the discussion is a question that I once saw phrased in the unsurpassably clear title of an article by the philosopher R. Foley: "Is it possible to Have Contradictory Beliefs?"[152] His arguments, not unexpectedly, are in favour of the answer 'no' and provide a perfect illustration of the gulf that yawns between (some) philosophical and logical disciplines on the one hand, ordaining that this cannot be—and (some) psychological and cultural studies which simply thrive on this inconsistency. Sophisticated psychological strategies are being launched day and night in order to allow us to live with and simultaneously believe in two contrasting realities. Theories of cognitive dissonance are revealing on that point.[153] Hence one problem is that (a particular branch of) philosophy and logic cannot allow what psychology reveals as ubiquitously existent. Another problem, specifically haunting our study, is that scholarship, including classical scholarship, when dealing with their literary objects of study, has to comply with a scholarly discourse that is dictated by the rules of our paradigm. And a third is that classicists, even if aware of the dubious grade of consistency in our own world of thought, *pace* Dodds' *The Greeks and the Irrational* would never accept that their ancient authors might be as irrational as their modern observers. We can see all three principles at work in the debate on polytheistic complexities in Appendix II, as well as previously in the present chapter.

Let us admit it. We simply are not in a position anymore to weigh *without prejudice* the following statement on the quick succession of

---

[151] Bakker 1997, 41: "The notion of parataxis frequently and typically conveys qualities such as primitive or crude."

[152] R. Foley, Is it possible to Have Contradictory Beliefs? *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 10 (1986) 327–355.

[153] Besides the works on cognitive dissonance discussed and applied in Versnel 1990 Introduction above, more general theories of cognitive consistency are relevant on the issue that human behaviour obeys an 'internal logic', or 'psycho-logic' rather than formal logic. See above n. 50. and Ch. III. n. 62.

Pindar's metaphors by one of the great specialists of more than a century ago, B.L. Gildersleeve,[154]

> In such passages the absence of conjunctions is sufficient to show that no connection was aimed at, and it is the fault of the reader if he chooses to complain of an incongruous blending of things that are left apart.

We cannot and we do not want to, because we are imprisoned in our paradigm of neat coherence, unity, and consistency. And we are so constrained that we spurn even as much as a consideration that (archaic) Greeks, when reflecting on the great vicissitudes of life, might have viewed things differently. For instance, in that they did not strive after an unambiguous unity, but contented themselves with "a pictorial whole of interconnected nodes" (Oudemans & Lardinois 1987, 49).

So far for the moment our discussion of the paratactic and asyndetic way of listing statements that, though often contradictory, nonetheless all claimed to represent a truth. The question remains where ancient authors found these reliable pieces of wisdom.

2. *'Gnomologisches Wissen'*

During a holiday in Greece I discussed a young girl's death by drowning with the owner of the local tavern who like me had witnessed the event. I asked her if there was a 'theological' explanation for this terrible tragedy. In an avalanche of words she explained that this was a *punishment* by God, that it was the *will* of God, that it *was written* (γραμμένον ειναι), that those *whom* God *loves* die young. What can we do? (Τί να κάνομε;).[155] The baffling thing was that these different explanations—multiple, different and *in my view* partly discordant—were presented not as discursive alternatives open for discussion or rational choice, but in an asyndetic chain of assertions. When, later, I recounted the whole event to Greek friends who had read their classics and asked what the difference might be between 'it is the will of God' and 'it is written', they first explained to me that το γραμμένον actually is an abbreviation of τής μοίρας γραμμένον, 'the writing of fate'—which I knew—, and next that there *is* no difference—which

[154] *Pindar, The Olympian and Pythian Odes* (New York 1890²) xliv.

[155] Next day, the local physician, wishing to show off his metropolitan disdain for such rustic tokens of superstition, expressed as his view that the father—for fear of being accused of incest—must have been involved in the death of the child.

I did not. When I, a renegade Calvinist, in defiance of Herzfeld's instructions (above p. 173, not known to me at the time) insisted that the (arbitrary) will of god, the punishment by god, and the writings of the Fates, could hardly be one and the same thing, they reluctantly admitted that God in some way or other must be a higher authority than fate,[156] but that it was impossible for them to make a clear distinction because "this is the way we say it" (έτσι το λέμμε).[157]

After consulting some literature on modern Greek representations of Death, Fate, and God, I understood my error. An expert in this field, R.A. Georges,[158] shows how the Fates, Lady Luck, God, *to grammenon*, and Envy, albeit different characters, may play completely identical roles in one story or radically opposed ones in different tales. He concludes:

> arbitrarily selected recorded stories from Greeks stressing fatalistic themes frequently present concepts that are not only inconsistent, but even contradictory

of which he gives astonishing examples.[159] This calls to mind that in cases of 'blame attribution' and 'pleas for excuse', according to J.L. Austin 1971 the acceptability of responses to disaster and references to external causes of error is not primarily dependent upon their logical persuasiveness but first and foremost on their embedding in cultural tradition. Their undisputed place in current idiom causes them to be

---

[156] Herzfeld 1982, 657 discusses the lack of clear attributes of the fates—as opposed to those of God or the Saints—among Greek villagers. "Verbal accounts are minimally descriptive, (….) and the role of God in directing the activities of fates seems to deprive them of an autonomous identity."

[157] Cf. Dodds 1951, 6: "*Moira*, I think, is brought in because people spoke of any unaccountable personal disaster as part of their 'portion' or 'lot', meaning simply that they cannot understand why it happened, but since it has happened, evidently, "it had to be." People still speak in that way, more especially of death, for which μῖρα has in fact become a synonym in modern Greek, like μόρος in classical Greek."

[158] R.A. Georges, Conceptions of Fate in Stories Told by Greeks, in: R.M. Dorson (ed.), *Folklore in the Modern World* (Paris 1978) 301–319, with earlier literature at p. 308, n. 3. Cf. Eitrem, art. Moira *RE* 1932, col. 2495 ff. with literature on the continuity of concepts of Fate etc. in modern Greece.

[159] "The fates of human beings, once determined, are often characterized as irrevocable, but they are also frequently depicted as alterable or even completely reversible, usually as a result of face-by-face interactions between mortals and the controllers of their destinies. Similarly, the extrahuman forces characterized in stories may be described as either accessible or inaccessible to human beings, sympathetic or unsympathetic to people's earthly plights, able or unable to offer advice or to alter human fortunes" (p. 308 f.).

accepted without obliging the language user to judge the ultimately irreducible issue of their truthfulness. This, in turn, fosters accumulation and variation and protects the user against the consciousness of inconsistency. Herzfeld 1982, 646: "there is no reason why a person should not claim that 'something was an accident' while *simultaneously* attributing other actions to 'fate' or some other cosmological force" (Herzfeld's italics). We have seen that this need not even be 'other actions' but that it works even for the same.

Here it is less easy than in the first chapter to doubt or deny a historical *trait d'union* between ancient and modern Greek representations of, in the present case, the forces that steer our destiny.[160] But it is not essential for my argument; what I am interested in is not the matter of cultural tradition or continuity. Also in other cultures the Christian God, once released from the theologian's protectorate, may be alternately conceived of as powerless against the Fates[161] or identified with Luck.[162] It suffices to have shown that human beings belonging to modern cultures are quite capable of uniting contradictory ideas about supernatural causation, and of listing them in ways that are practically identical with those of archaic Greek authors.

Έτσι το λέμμε: "this is the way we say it." That is *façon de dire*, 'our way of speaking', speaking in maxim or proverb, in ancient Greek *gnome*.[163] So here we are back at Dodds' casual remark, which I recommended for serious consideration earlier (p. 175). And we may now also complete Gould's view of the Herodotean "different explanatory generalizations, each containing a truth" (above p. 199) with his further remark (*ibid.* 81):

> Herodotus' audience would have recognized his generalizations as *gnomai* (……) a summing up of human experience (….). What the proverb

[160] In fact there is nothing against the idea of a cultural heritage of such expressions of folk wisdom and here I feel myself backed up by K.J. Dover, *JHS* 103 (1983) 48.

[161] G.A. Megas, *ARW* 30 (1933) 3; R.W. Brednick, *Volkserzählungen und Volksglaube von den Schicksalsfrauen* (FF Communications 193, Helsinki 1964) 31 ff.

[162] Banfield 1958, 107 ff. as quoted above n. 44.

[163] Greek *gnomai* are not exactly the same as proverbs. See: K. Rupprecht, 'Paroimία' and Paroimiographoi, *RE* 18 (1949) 1707–1778; J.F. Kindstrand, The Greek Concept of Proverbs, *Eranos* 7 (1978) 71–85; Russo 1997. However, I feel comforted by a great expert in the field, A. Lardinois 1997, 214: "but they can be effectively studied in the same way."

> does not do, nor will it be supposed by its hearers to do, is require all subsequent experience to bear it out."[164]

Indeed archaic diction concerning fate and the gods is to a very large extent gnomic. So it may be expedient to expand our explorations a bit further into what, by way of variation on a concept created by Max Weber, namely 'nomologisches Wissen',[165] I would propose to call 'gnomologisches Wissen',[166] which moreover has the advantage of having a basis in ancient Greek lexicography. I mean the total supply of folk wisdom as stored in the treasure-house of maxims and proverbs.[167] In so doing we find support in Aristotle, himself one of the first collectors of *gnomai*, who (*Rhet.* 1394a21) discusses the issue of γνωμολογεῖν, 'to speak in maxims' and at another place even is said to have given the advice ([*Rhet. Al.*] 439a3) γνωμολογητέον: 'one must speak in maxims', since "people are pleased when they hear things said in general terms, which they happen to have grasped before in the particular case" (*Rhet.* 1395b5–6). Indeed, archaic Greek culture, like many other predominantly oral cultures, lived by maxims, *gnomai*, as their late offspring did and do.[168]

---

[164] Elaborating on this at p. 81 f. Gould's ideas are vigorously endorsed and revealingly elaborated on by Harrison 2000, 9 f. and 39 f., with whose discussion I am in full agreement.

[165] M. Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre* (Tübingen 1968) 192, meaning the shared awareness of traditional legal and ethological conventions within one community, and productively applied by Christian Meyer to ancient Athens.

[166] Cf. G. von Rad, *Theologie des alten Testaments* I (Münich 1966[5]) 434 f. (a reference that I owe to Mr. Fokke Plat), who uses *en passant* the terminology 'gnomische Apperzeption' and 'empirisch-gnomische Weisheit'. For the theory behind it he leans heavily on Jolles 1930, whose study is still to be recommended.

[167] And *ainoi*, and fables. On the relationship of fables and proverbs see: P. Carnes, *Proverbia in Fabula* (Bern 1988); G.-J. van Dijk, *Ainoi, Logoi, Mythoi: Fables in Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic Greek Literature. With a Study of the Theory and Terminology of the Genre* (Leiden 1997). On ancient gnomologies: K. Horna, Gnome, Gnomendichtung, Gnomologies, *RE Suppl.* 6 (1935) 74–90. More recent titles in Lardinois 1997, 213 n. 1; W. Slater, Gnomology and Criticsm, *GRBS* 41 (2001) 99–121, espec. 99 n. 2.

[168] Lardinois, in his unpublished dissertation (see below) found more than 1200 gnomai in the works of the archaic Greek poets. See also the collection of Ahrens 1936 and more generally: Russo 1997, 49–64. For modern Greece see the full collection by P. Karagiorgos, *Greek and English Proverbs* (Athens 2000) with a history of the traditional elements in his Introduction. On the complications of defining the notion 'oral' see below n. 185. Aristotle's predilection for the maxim rests on the grounds that it displays the speaker's *ethos*, a view that only makes sense within a context of accepted values. In this respect the maxim is related to the rhetorical *topos* of the *enthymeme*: Kirwan 1990, 126 f.

In the first half of the 20th century, with an emphasis in the thirties, an interest in proverbial expression developed in the studies of ethnology and folklore, which also found a reflection in Greek studies.[169] One of its lasting results was the insight that maxims and proverbs are inherently and inevitably mutually contradictory.[170]

After this first bloom it is, in the words of Lardinois 1997, 213 "surprising how little attention they (i.e. gnomai, proverbs) have received in recent scholarship. (….) All comprehensive studies of the Greek γνώμη, or wisdom saying, date from before the Second World War." That is: among students of Greek culture, whose supposed reservations are suggestively intimated in what Slater *o.c.* (above n. 167, p. 100) says about gnomai:

> It was largely unquestioned wisdom, even if it did not stand up to rigorous examination and was often contradictory. Systematic morality is something for philosophers not ordinary mortals, and there has accordingly always been a strong tradition of caution verging on contempt for unsystematic and tedious moralizing maxims. (….) Perhaps in modern times the intellectualist attitude has been more apparent in scholarship…….

In the meantime, however, the discipline of ethno- and sociolinguistics witnessed the rise of a spate of new studies since the 1960s.[171] Their central interest is focused on the proverb's context, in particular its social and linguistic embedding. The meaning of proverbs is to a large extent dependent on the particular context in which they are used.[172]

---

[169] See for a survey of Greek titles: Lardinois 1997, 213 n. 2; 2001, 93 n. 2.

[170] Von Rad 1966, 435, following Jolles 1931, 156: "Es ist ein leichtes, Sprüche einander zu konfrontieren, die keineswegs übereinstimmen, ja die einander gelegentlich geradezu widersprechen." G. Permiakov, *From Proverb to Folk-Tale. Notes on the General Theory of Cliché* (Moscow 1979) 173: "Proverbs are signs of situations which are infinitely varied, and include many that are directly opposite in character. Herein lies the secret of the long-noted but still largely unexplained mutual contradictoriness of proverbial sayings and of the logical system of proverbs in general. It is the logic of common sense." Cf. Mieder & Dundes 1981. Till very recently, this has largely gone unnoticed or, if noticed at all, remained undervalued in classical studies.

[171] See for a detailed bibliography: W. Mieder, *International Proverb Scholarship: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York 1982); *idem, International Proverb Scholarship: An Annotated Bibliograph. Supplement* (New York 1990). There is a special journal: *Proverbium*.

[172] Lardinois, 1997, 221, gives the bibliography on this particular aspect of the new proverb research. See especially: Mieder & Dundes 1981, and cf. Shapiro 2000, 94–95. In this respect gnomai belong to the wider category of the 'cultural model', a concept introduced by D. Holland & N. Quinn (edd.), *Cultural Models in Language and Thought* (Cambridge 1987), and which they define as a narrative, prototypical, schematic, and

After a period of silence, only interrupted by casual observations of Einzelgänger such as Dodds and Gould as cited above, more recently classicists have accepted the challenge and responded to the newer insights in the socio-linguistic discipline. A. Lardinois produced the only, but still unpublished, monograph so far with his Princeton dissertation *Wisdom in Context: The Use of Gnomic Statements in Archaic Greek Poetry* (1995), revised parts of which appeared as Lardinois 1997, 2000, 2001.[173] They are fundamental for an appreciation of the new 'contextual' approach of the gnome. His and others' recent studies demonstrate that a proverb may have different meanings according to the situation of the speaker,[174] that proverbs may vary according to their addressees, that literary characters may be characterized by their preference for one of the different types of addressee,[175] and that they may be characterized by being eager or reluctant to use proverbs.[176] In all these ways, very much including their role in creating ambiguity, proverbs are now widely applied as tools of the literary critic in bringing to light the literary skills of their author.[177]

---

simplified form of social knowledge, available to interpret events. Especially relevant to our present topic is their stressing of the simultaneity of a variety of cultural models (pp. 6–8). At p. 10 they claim: "That there is no coherent cultural system of knowledge, only an array of different culturally shared schematizations formulated for the performance of particular cognitive tasks, accounts for the co-existence of conflicting cultural models encountered in many domains of existence."

[173] I am grateful to the author for giving me the opportunity to consult this impressive work. Some aspects of the new contextual approach had already been fruitfully applied for Greek literature by e.g. J. Russo, The Poetics of the Ancient Greek Proverb, *Journal of Folklore Research* 20 (1983) 121–130, and Y.Z. Tzifopoulos, Proverbs in Menander's Dyskolos: The Rhetoric of Popular Wisdom, *Mnemosyne* 48 (1995) 169–177. Older literature in: H.A. Gärtner, 'Gnome' in: *NP* 4 (1998) 1108–1116.

[174] See Chapter V p. 425 with n. 154.

[175] Lardinois 2000 demonstrates the usefulness of the distinction (made by Peter Seitel in a string of studies, including: Proverbs: A Social Use of Metaphor, in: Mieder & Dundes 1981, 122–139) in their applicability to the speaker himself (first person), the addressee (second person), or a more general audience, not necessarily present (third person). The same proverb can be used in all three different applications. Lardinois shows that Achilles, Nestor and Odysseus are characterized by addressing different addressees and adapting their choice of proverbs: Achilleus mainly 'first person', Nestor mostly 'second person'. Agamemnon is not discussed.

[176] Y.Z. Tzifopoulos, Hermes and Apollo at Onchestos in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*: The Poetics and Performance of Proverbial Communication, *Mnemosyne* 53 (2000) 148–163.

[177] Hence also a revived interest in individual authors' application of gnomai in their works. Besides Lardinois 1997, 2000 (*Iliad*); Tzifopoulos *oo.cc* (above n. 173 (Menander), n. 176 (*Hymn to Hermes*); M.S. Funghi (ed.), *Aspetti di letteratura gnomica nel mondo antico* (Florence 2003–4); J. Stenger, *Poetische Argumentation.*

The reason for presenting this account of the new wave in proverb research, unknown to me while writing the bulk of the present chapter, is the need of testing whether it affects the interpretation of the texts, especially those of Herodotus and Solon, that we have discussed. Are the 'proverbial' explanations that we have discussed more than a reflection of "the continued operation and influence of traditional folk wisdom," as Lang has it and as I have accepted in our earlier discussion?[178] Here we can call in the aid of Shapiro 2000, on "Proverbial Wisdom in Herodotus." Largely based on the survey by Lang 1984, 58–67, her collection counts eighty-six gnomai in Herodotus. She focuses on Herodotus' use of contradictory proverbs used as opposing points of view in verbal duels and finds that one side always wins. The reader thus perceives that one view of events was more accurate than the other. Unfortunately, none of Amasis' and Solon's expressions of proverbial wisdom, though adopted in her collection, figures in her discussion. Understandably too, since they do not represent one side of a verbal duel. Hence, Shapiro allows these gnomai to be taken as performing the accepted conventional function of proverbs: "they have an explanatory function: by applying a widely accepted truth to a particular situation and, in most cases, to recommend a course of action as well." While contradictory proverbs in verbal duels serve to support opposing points of view, "outside of verbal duels, they may apply to different contexts or encourage deliberation about a particular situation" (95). That is *inter alia* indeed what they do in our passages.

Die Funktion der Gnomik in den Epinikien des Bakchylides (Berlin-New York 2004); A.P.M.H. Lardinois, The Polysemy of Gnomic Expressions and Ajax' Deception Speech, in: I.J.F. de Jong & A. Rijksbaron (edd.), *Sophocles and the Greek Language: Aspects of Diction, Syntax, and Pragmatics* (Leiden 2005) 213–223. R.P. Martin, Gnomes in Poems: Wisdom Performance on the Athenian Stage, (Princeton/Stanford Working Papers in Classics 2005), forthcoming in the *Festschrift for John Papademetriou*, contributes a particularly insightful introduction to the application of ethnographically informed folklore studies elaborating on his thesis that Homeric epic preserves stylized performances of social speech genres as in *The Language of Heroes: Speech and Performance in the Iliad* (Ithaca 1989). He applies these findings to 5th c. dramatists and Thucydides. Recently: E. Lelli, *Volpe e leone. Il proverbio nella poesia greca (Alceo, Cratino, Callimaco)* (Roma 2006); H. Boeke, *The Value of Victory in Pindar's Odes: Gnomai, Cosmology and the Role of the Poet* (Mnemosyne Supp. 285, Leiden 2007), with in Ch. 2, another introduction into and ample use of modern scholarship on the proverb. Cf. also C. Tsagalis, *Inscribing Sorrow: Fourth-Century Attic Funerary Epigrams* (Berlin 2007) Ch. 1 (9–61): "The Use of Gnomic Expressions."

[178] Lang 1984, 65, elsewhere (52), however, stating that some of them are "basic to Herodotus' (…) historical interpretation."

There might have been an opportunity to read contradictory proverbs in(to) the Solon-Croesus story. For instance by recognizing in Apollo's 'hereditary guilt' argument a proverbial wisdom, which it no doubt is. In that case we would indeed have a couple of contradictory enunciations in Solon's proverbial wisdom sayings on the one hand and those of Apollo on the other, but *not* applied in a verbal duel. Either of them represents a truth and Herodotus leaves it at that. Divergent as they may be, they have one thing in common: they are all quite appropriate and conform with what is going to happen or has happened. Neither ousts the other. There is no winner for there is no competition. The author could do that because all of them belong to the category of philosophical orientation representing elemental forces such as fate, god, nature, questions of life and death.[179] In Shapiro's discussion 'duels' between two proverbs of this kind are conspicuously absent. The duels are almost always between gnomai of a second category, the one concerning the nature and obligations of human relationships, such as family, fellow citizens and enemies, as well as views on human nature as it reveals itself in a social context.[180] In sum, the new approaches in proverb research are welcome and important. However, they do not affect our earlier insight into the function of proverbial wisdom in our texts, namely to render experience intelligible or acceptable.[181]

---

[179] I am here using the classification introduced by Boeke *o.c.* (above n. 177), Ch. 3.

[180] Duels between proverbs belonging to the two different categories are exceptional All this is also relevant to Pelling 2006, 143 n. 7, who betrays a touch of annoyance about Gould's emphasis on the undeniable prevalence of proverbs in the Solon-Croesus *logos*: "Nor does it reduce the significance of the passage to observe that much of Solon's moralizing is conventional wisdom, a series of proverbs which are thrown at experience and may not always match up to its complexity." Hence he calls like-minded colleagues to assistance against Gould, including one who suggests: "that Herodotus' narrative could be seen to be *in competition with* proverbs" (italics in the original). Accordingly, like Shapiro, Pelling himself is more interested in "the unexpected turn" that proverbs may take than in their conventional task to render experience intelligible or acceptable. He takes to witness Shapiro's treatment of the Gyges and Candaules passage 1.8, where one finds no fewer than three proverbs about which he concludes that (145): "if there is a truth and insight in what people say, it turns out to be in unexpected ways." But all the examples of the Gyges-Cambyses story concern experiences or lessons of Boeke's second (social) category as I just argued and are of no relevance whatsoever to the proverbial strategies in the Solon passage.

[181] However, this does not mean that they may not be helpful in other respects. One might try out Seitel's 'three person' approach (above n. 175) on Solon's thirteenth elegy with its juxtaposition of two contradictory elaborations of 'proverbial' wisdom. Perhaps this may be seen as a corollary of Solon deploying a 'multi-addressee' strategy. There is a general consensus that he is addressing the *(nouveau) rich* (2nd person) of his time. But one may argue that in a self-reflective way he also addresses the '1st

3. *The rehabilitation of parataxis*

Lardinois 2001, 93–107, has introduced a new and interesting element in the discussion in showing how standard proverbial themes are rarely passed on verbatim. Every generation or individual will cloth it in its own wording. "A set form is not a requirement for proverbial use" (Briggs). He notes that this is typical of an oral stage of text tradition. And with this we once more touch upon the other discovery going back to the early 20th century, that of the so-called paratactic style of archaic diction, which, however, as discussed earlier, was almost completely barred from the discourse of modern literary criticism. Here, too, the nineties witnessed the first signs of a revolutionary change.[182] It appears that the notion of 'paratactic style' enjoys a glorious comeback thanks above all to the innovative work of E.J. Bakker,[183] and S.R. Slings,[184] who introduced the notion of 'speech' as opposed to 'text' as a major instrument for enquiry into the nature of archaic Greek discourse. Since not only Homer, but archaic poetry in general is oral,[185]

---

person' as well as a more general audience (3d person). Each might have been served with a selection of his proverbial arguments. Accumulating them into a paratactic composition reveals differences and effectuates contradiction (as well as a frightening proliferation of modern studies).

[182] As was recently brought to my notice by Caspar de Jonge and Marlein van Raalte.

[183] Bakker 1997; *idem*, The syntax of historiê: How Herodotus writes, in: Dewald & Marincola 2006, 92–102.

[184] S.R. Slings, Written and Spoken Language: An Exercise in the Pragmatics of the Greek Sentence, *CP* 87 (1992) 95–109; *idem*, Een tandje lager: Aanzetten voor een orale grammatica van Homerus, *Lampas* 27 (1994) 411–427; *idem*, Figures of Speech and their Lookalikes: Two Further Exercises in the Pragmatics of the Greek Sentence, in: E.J. Bakker (ed.), *Grammar as Interpretation: Greek Literature in its Linguistic Context* (Leiden 1997) 169–214; *idem*, Symposium: Speech and Ideology: Two Hermeneutical Issues in Early Greek Lyric, with Special Reference to Mimnermus (*Med. Kon. Ak. Wet.* 63 [2000] no. 1); *idem*, Oral Strategies in the Language of Herodotus, in: Bakker 2003, 53–77.

[185] 'Oral' is far from being an unequivocal notion, as *inter alios* illuminatingly argued by E.J. Bakker, *Pointing at the Past: From Formula to Performance in Homeric Poetics* (Hellenic Studies 12, Cambridge MA—London 2005), Ch. 3, "How Oral is Oral Composition?" (pp. 38–55). He differentiates between the two oppositions 'oral versus literate' and 'oral versus written', in the first of which 'oral' refers to the 'medium' of communication and in the second to a conception. This has serious consequences, including "that writing in the Greek archaic period must have been so different from our notion of writing, so 'oral', in fact, that the simple dichotomy between orality and literacy breaks down." When, in the following I will not make an appeal to the well-known theories of Alexander Luria, Eric Havelock, Jack Goody and Walter Ong, claiming that the invention of writing (and reading) was the seminal impulse—and indeed conditional—to the early development of (our modern) formal rational thought and

its way of expression should be situated within the wider contexts of spoken language and communication. It should be measured with the standards proper to 'speech' and no longer with the rules of written text.[186]

Now, spoken discourse can be seen as a sequence of short speech units reflecting the flow of speech through the consciousness of the speaker, as among others argued by Bakker 1997, in the first monograph on the subject. Chafe 1994, who is Bakker's source of inspiration especially in the latter's chapter 3, "Consciousness and Cognition," has coined them 'intonation units' emphasizing their physical, empirically observable quality as units of speech.[187] Bakker 48, after Chafe 1994, 55:

> The intonation unit is the linguistic equivalent of the focus of consciousness, the amount of information that is active at any one time in a speaker's consciousness. The intonation unit is the largest linguistic unit that is available in its entirety to consciousness, the typical sequence of speech sounds that is within the grasp of the speaker's, and listener's, echoic memory; any stretch of discourse that is longer will have to be processed as more than one of these basic chunks.

One might read this as an experiment-based theoretical commentary on the paratactic stringing of gnomic one-liners that we have found to be typical of archaic literature and Herodotus. Some years prior to

---

abstract conceptualisation, this is not because this theory should have been refuted by e.g. S. Scribner & M. Cole, *The Psychology of Literacy* (Cambridge MA 1981 [not literacy itself but the educational process that leads to it would be the essential stimulus to logical conceptualisation, a theory massively disproved by the subsequent works of D. Olson, e.g. *The World on Paper: The Conceptual and Cognitive Implications of Writing and Reading* [Cambridge 1994]), nor for reasons of political or cultural correctness vis à vis the archaic Greeks, but simply because their orality belonged to Bakker's second category. These early Greek poets were not illiterate but created (most probably *written*) poetry that, however, was not intended for being recorded and stored in script (and read), but for memorization and oral performance. As such one might call it oral poetry made by a literate poet. See most recently: A. Lardinois, "Someone, I say, will remember us:" Oral Memory in Sappho's Poetry, in: E.A. Mackay (ed.), *Orality, Literacy, Memory in the Ancient Geek and Roman World* (Suppl. Mnemosyne 298, Leiden 2008), 79–96. For an informative critique of earlier theories and a nuanced position see: R. Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge 1992), also H. Yunis (ed.), *Written Texts and the Rise of Literate Culture in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge 2003).

[186] On the difference between spoken and written language: G. Brown & G. Yule, *Discourse Analysis* (Cambridge 1983); Slings 1992 (see above n. 183).

[187] S.R. Slings, Information Unit and Metrical Unit, in: I.L. Pfeijffer & S.R. Slings (ed.), *One Hundred Years of Bacchylides: Proceedings of a Colloquium Held at he Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam* (Amsterdam 1999) 61–75, prefers the term 'information unit' but means the same.

Bakker's book Slings had contributed the notion of 'pragmatics' to the discussion, arguing that in an oral grammar pragmatic requirements often overrule syntactic rules. Quite a few syntactical phenomena which, if judged according to rules of written texts, should be (and are being) disqualified as childish errors or primitive relics from archaic times, are unmasked and appreciated as normal and regular features of spoken language. This also and most specifically applies to what the scholars of the first half of the 20th c. (as well as, later, Milman Parry for Homer) called the adding or string style typified by paratactic organization. Both Bakker and Slings emphasize their prevalence in archaic literature but convincingly argue that this is not a heritage of a more primitive way of expressing (or worse: thinking). On the contrary, parataxis is a basic marker of speech, ancient or modern. We should discontinue associating it with the difference between archaic (primitive) and classic (polished) expression, and instead adopt a distinction between (spoken) 'speech' and (written) 'text'. It is the art of writing that gives an author time to string his speech-'chunks' into a hypotactical structure. Speech does not allow that. There it is "one chunk per clause." Although I think that one does not entirely rule out the other, the argumentation seems irrefutable.

Apart from providing revealing explanations of so far recalcitrant problems in early Greek discourse, (as well as justifying my earlier introduction—above p. 218—of the *lexis eiromenê* of a simple modern Greek native speaker by way of illustration of the diction of most hallowed ancient Greek authors!), the new approach gracefully rids us of the precarious notion 'primitive' connected with *parataxis*. And Herodotus? Was he 'oral'?

> It is a platitude to say that Herodotus stands on the watershed between the oral and literate phases of Greek culture. Many idiosyncrasies of his style suggest that he stands in a tradition of telling stories, and that the written language in his time was only in its infancy. The challenge is to turn this impressionistic triviality into scholarship.

Thus the opening words of Slings's "Oral strategies in the language of Herodotus" (2002). He analyses Herodotus narrative fashion[188] especially in his use of 'intonation/information units' of restricted length. Many of the gnomic wisdom expressions in the Solon-Croesus logos are of this nature. He finds typical Herodotean oral strategies such as

[188] As does Bakker (2006) in the field of syntax.

chunking as we see it in the juxtaposition of information units. His conclusion:

> Herodotus uses many oral strategies and he does so in a natural way because he has an audience of listeners in mind. Yet he uses also oral strategies where they are not required by the needs of the audience, in order to highlight important events in history. That is to say, although his is basically an oral style, he can also use oral as rhetorical devices when it suits him.

And it may well have been the latter motive that played a role in his paratactic organization of gnomic expressions in the Solon-Croesus logos.

4. *Thinking in* gnomai*—speaking in parataxis*

Two nearly obsolete discoveries of the early twentieth century have been revived, dusted off, and refreshed with a welcome facelift in modern theory. The application of 'speech' theory in particular has put the much abused *lexis eiromene* back on the agenda while considerably increasing our insight into its cultural ambience. I have retained my own disposition as it was written long before these newer refurbishments came to hit my retina, and have added the above review of them in the final phase of the book's completion. It is an immense relief to find that it is no longer anathema to label the phenomena that we discussed in this chapter: "thinking in *gnomai*—speaking in parataxis," and to take these as two characteristics of archaic and archaizing literature.

However, to some readers, as I found out, this may seem a dangerously banal result. And, on top of that, an irritating one since it lives on logical inconsistencies. Vicarious shame for such unsophisticated behaviour imputed to their author invites many a (professional) reader to either deride the mere suggestion of triviality or, if pressed further, as soon as possible to outsmart any touch of the banal or outmanoeuvre its inherent inconsistencies. The historian, on the other hand, has no other choice than to accept what he believes to have discovered. Sometimes life is fascinating, mostly it is banal. Then, for the scholar there is only one solution: let's make the banal fascinating.[189]

---

[189] As it is propagated by for instance Natalie Zemon Davies especially in her 'Proverbial wisdom and popular errors', in: *eadem*, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France. Eight Essays* (Stanford 1975) 227–270, espec. 266: "Let us imagine just that we are watching our subjects with their differences in symbols, social intercourse, and

But *is* it so trivial? One of the fascinating results of our quest is its bearing on the great debate between Dodds and Lloyd-Jones concerning the gradual change or continuity in the conceptions of divine justice as opposed to an a-moral fatalism, as it took its form in the Sather arena over the last fifty years. One may agree with Dodds that the differences are mainly a question of emphasis and focus, and "that both authors are right, though both at times exaggerating the partial truth they are stressing." But, what *we* have discovered is a pervasive *co-existence* of images of supernatural justice on the one hand, and various sorts of natural or supernatural arbitrariness and fatalism, on the other. If so, should we not consider the possibility that this persistent interaction of the two contrastive concepts is at least equally characteristic of the archaic Greek world view as either one of the two contesting views?

Living by maxims,—an encyclopedia of "as we say it"'s—in a luxuriant multiplicity, a never ending string of *gnomai* scattered over the total literary corpus, and sometimes, as exemplarily in our passages, ranged one after the other in a single context. While the Theognidean corpus represents a rather arbitrary collection of elaborated *gnomai*,[190] great authors have developed this geysering into an art 'good to live by'. Indeed, we may view the *chains of sequences* of gnomic wisdom in the passages of Homer, Herodotus and Solon as a skilful way of displaying the entire gamut of 'gnomologisches Wissen', without imposing a tyrannical coherence, allowing every reader to pick what he likes but not imposing any urge upon those readers or listeners that do not feel the need to choose.

So I would argue for a constant phenomenon, embodied in a simultaneous availability of expressions of hope and desperation, an optimistic and a pessimistic stance. As we all know, different Greek authors put their emphasis on different aspects, and *every* author would, in

---

technical apparatus. Let us imagine that they are in some sense equivalent to us, in some kind of exchange with us while we look them over, able to answer us back if we should go astray," a principle she applies herself by creating a discussion between subject and the author.

[190] Hence sometimes called the 'Gnomology' and taken as a collection brought together by different 'authors': J. Carrière, *Théognis de Mégare. Étude sur le recueil élégiaque attribué à ce poète* (Paris 1948). Cf. West 1974, 57. J.P. Brown, Proverb book, Gold economy, Alphabet, *JBL* 100 (1981) 169–191, traces back collections of proverbs like that of Theognis to Hebrew books of wisdom and concludes that commercial connections served as the way of transport.

specific situations, opportunistically select that option which would best serve his goal. He opts for divine justice if he needs to warn off malicious opponents, and he chooses arbitrary fate if he is in need of an excuse for his own failure. The really interesting observation, however, is that there is not one consistent philosophy and that the two extremes so often appear in peaceful coexistence in one literary work or even in one passage.[191] So they did in the Homeric passage that we took as our vignette and in the passages of Herodotus and Solon that we discussed. And as they most flagrantly do in Hesiod, that specialist in "multiple approaches," as he has been called,[192] to whom we will now, finally, return.

7. Putting to the Test: Hesiod

The famous opening lines of Hesiod's *Erga* (1–10) consist of a hymn that glorifies Zeus:

1. Muses from Pieria, who glorify by songs,
2. come to me, tell of Zeus your father in your singing.
3. Because of him mortal men are unmentioned and mentioned,
4. spoken and unspoken of, according to great Zeus' will.
5. For easily he makes strong, and easily he oppresses the strong,
6. easily he diminishes the conspicuous, and magnifies the inconspicuous,
7. and easily he makes the crooked straight and withers the proud,
8. Zeus who thunders on high, who dwells in the highest mansions.
9. hearken as thou seest and hearest, and make judgment straight with righteousness,
10. Lord; while I should like to tell Perses words of truth.

[191] And nothing to be ashamed of, for no less a person than Clifford Geertz has related this amphiboly with 'meaning'. Geertz 1966, 24: "The problem of meaning… is a matter of affirmation, or at least recognizing, the inescapability of ignorance, pain and injustice on the human plane while simultaneously denying that these irrationalities are characteristic of the world as a whole." For a discussion of this classic, see: T. Asad, Anthropological Conceptions of Religion: Reflections on Geertz, *Man* 18 (1983) 237–259.

[192] Rowe 1983. His view of Hesiod's poetry finds an extreme counterpole in J. Strauss Clay, *Hesiod's Cosmos* (Cambridge 2003), who argues for a "coherent plan that unites the poems into a consistent vision that is both thoughtful and subtle" (p. 2).

This is a true hymn in that it consists of two parts, of which one, comprising the first 7 or 8 lines,[193] is an extended praise of the god that is invoked. The final two lines turn to a personal prayer for justice.[194] In the commentaries one will find that, as a rule, the interpretation of the first part is coloured by the commentator's awareness of what is to come in the end, and, of course, by his/her familiarity with the central issue of the whole poem. Yet there is no reference whatsoever to this central theme in the first six lines. What we do have is a typical praise of omnipotence such as we find in abundance in hymnic poetry, especially emphasizing the god's power to do either of two opposite things 'easily', as we have seen in the first section of this chapter and will extensively discuss in the fifth chapter.[195]

In his commentary *ad locum* West rightly notes that "usually it is not represented as a question of what one deserves but simply as one of God's whim or private purposes," adding that up to line 7 "Hesiod does not go beyond this". He also points out that, still in the context of praise, line 7 introduces the suggestion that it is the unrighteous who are brought down. However this may be, the first lines picture Zeus as omnipotent, capable of arbitrarily interfering in two different directions, according to his free will. As such he comes very close to powers like Fate, or Fortune, or 'the Gods' or 'the Divine' to whom generally in archaic poetry the same principle of arbitrariness is assigned. There is no notion of morality involved. Only in the last lines does the objectivizing description change into a subjective prayer: Zeus' omnipotence now is exploited for a particular goal and, accordingly, is now positively specified as an instrument to do justice, naturally so, since it serves Hesiod's personal motive. But in Hesiod's works the two themes alternate alarmingly.

---

[193] Line 8 is a typical instance of 'dual functionality' as discussed above n. 67.

[194] Cf. Et. Gud. 540.46 ὕμνος· ἔστιν ὁ μετὰ προσκυνήσεως καὶ εὐχῆς κεκραμένης ἐπαίνῳ λόγος εἰς θεούς.

[195] In Greek literature especially the element of 'making the small great and the great small' is popular in order to warn against feelings of superiority and 'haughty thoughts' (as we saw in Herodotus). After the Thebans have defeated the Spartans at Leuktra, Jason of Pherae warns them not to grow overconfident "for it seems that the deity often takes delight in making the small great and the great small" (καὶ ὁ θεὸς δέ, ὡς ἔοικε, πολλάκις χαίρει τοὺς μὲν μικροὺς μεγάλους ποιῶν, τοὺς δὲ μεγάλους μικρούς) (Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.23). And see for its proverbial status below, Ch. V, p. 423, with n. 146.

Now, it is the same Hesiod who in a few lines of his *Theogony* splendidly summarizes my argument. In *Th.* 901 ff., in a list of the marriages and offspring of Zeus:[196]

> Second he (Zeus) married sleek Themis, who bore the 'Watchers' (Ὥρας): Lawfulness (Εὐνομίην), Justice (Δίκην), and flourishing Peace (Εἰρήνην), who watch over (ὠρεύουσι) the works of mortal men; and the Fates (Μοίρας), to whom Zeus the resourceful gave the most privilege (πλείστην τιμὴν), Klotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, who give mortal men both good and ill.

We recognize the same two principles as implied in the opening hymn of the *Erga*, this time, however, staged as two triads of daughters of Zeus, the first three being the well-known personifications of Justice and her blessings,[197] the latter, the Moirai, as the explicitly *arbitrary* dispensers of good *and* evil. Fate(s) and Justice, each of them often pictured as close relatives of Zeus, either as daughter or as assistant or, in the case of the Moirai, also as superiors.[198] Here, despite their

---

[196] There is a different variation in the *Great Eoiai* 2 = Anon. *Comm. Ar. Nicom. Eth.* 3.7. "And, they say, Hesiod is sufficient to prove that the word *poneros* (bad) has the same sense as 'laborious or ill-fated'; for in the *Great Ehoiai* he represents Alcmene as saying to Heracles: 'My son, truly Zeus your father begot you to be the most toilful (πονηρότατον) and the most excellent (ἄριστον)…' (ὦ τέκος, ἦ μάλα δή σε πονηρότατον καὶ ἄριστον Ζεὺς τέκνωσε πατήρ) and [again in the very same wording but with a different subject]: 'The Fates (αἱ Μοῖραι) (made) you the most toilful and the most excellent…'

[197] See: J. Rudhardt, *Thémis et les Horai. Recherches sur les divinités grecques de la justice et de la paix* (Genève 1999) 59–96, and Furley-Bremer 2001, I, 19–20. That the origin of the Horai may be connected with natural growth, fertility and lushness, "forces qui favorisent la croissance et la maturation des végétaux" (Rudhardt *o.c.* 15, as in Attika Auxo, Karpo, Thallo [Paus. 9.35.2]) and that this may have fostered the association with the moral and social qualities as represented in their names in this passage may all be true. See West *a.l.* But what is relevant here is the fact that these names in this passage cannot but directly refer to the moral domain of human life in connection *and* opposition to that of their sisters the Moirai. This in my view means that the expression ὠρεύουσι ἔργα ἀνθρώπων (whatever the precise etymology of the verb) cannot be understood here as "qui pour les hommes mortels protégent (gardent) leurs ouvrages." On the contrary, it is comparable with *E.* 253 f., where the 'thirty thousand' gods are pictured as the "watchers of the immortals" who keep an eye on their rightful and wicked works (φυλάσσουσίν τε δίκας καὶ σχέτλια ἔργα). Note that Archilochos Fr. 177 (quoted above p. 156) has a similar expression in: Ζεῦ, σὺ δ' ἔργ' ἐπ' ἀνθρώπων ὁρᾶις λεωργὰ καὶ θεμιστά, where the works of men as watched by Zeus are explicitly taken in their moral implications.

[198] As accounted for in our text by attributing to them "the most privilege." Elsewhere (*Th.* 217 ff.) Hesiod makes the Moirai the unfathered daugthers of Night. They may also take the position of the Horai: the *Prayer to the Fates* ascribed to Simonides (Bowra 1961, 404–415) asks the Moirai "who sit closest to Zeus" to send Eunomia,

logical incompatibility, united as the daughters of Zeus and Themis, 'the divinely inspired order of things'. I could not have wished for a better illustration of what I have tried to argue.

8. Envoy

It has been suggested that[199] "Herodotus' narrative does perhaps more clearly convey the idea that the most fundamental of all human disabilities is the inability, displayed by Croesus, to understand the nature of human experience." I believe this is true. However, demonstrating this inability in such probing fashion as archaic Greek writers did, is to my mind anything but a disability. A great fascination and indeed a charm may be hidden in the agglutinative way in which Greeks expressed this inability, particularly in those fields which by definition can never be expected to yield decisive choices, solutions or conclusions, such as, pre-eminently, theology and philosophy of life.[200] Here the Greeks might be lauded with the words of Charles Darwin: "There is grandeur in this view of life with its several powers."[201] Accepting no bridle in their shifts of perspective, undogmatic in the elasticity of their representations, undaunted in accommodating the incompatible, desperate and hopeful, *polytropic*, so are my (early) Greeks.

Dike, and Eirene in succour to their city. For other links between Horai and Moirai, see: West *ad* v. 904. Recently, G. Pironti, 'Dans l'entourage de Thémis: les Moires et les *normes* panthéoniques', in: Brulé 2009, 13–27, discusses the relationship of Themis and the Moirai as the representatives of two founding concepts of human and divine society: the norm and the partition. However, in the present passage, the Moirai are explicitly pictured in their more 'primitive' nature of arbitrary distributors of good and evil.

[199] Gould 1989, 80.

[200] This restriction is not superfluous. Even if we have seen that the stringing style also prevailed in early Greek scientific prose (above n. 165), we should beware of inconsiderately projecting conclusions that apply to the domain of theology onto other sections of human reflection with different types of discourse, social interaction or cultural embeddedness. This is the central theme of Lloyd 1990, who importantly concludes his research on early (formerly: 'primitive') cultures (p. 145): "But just as the analysis of individual utterances requires full account to be taken of the circumstances of delivery (…) so it may be argued more generally questions to do with systems of belief or modes of reasoning as a whole can only be answered if due attention is paid to *types* of social interaction and to the expectations participants may have concerning their nature and the manner of their conduct."

[201] In his conclusion of *The Origin of Species* on the pluriformity of the natural world, meant as an apologetic attempt to reconcile his theological opponents.

In one of his vigorous attacks on our late-modern quest for unity and an emotional plea for pluralism, Paul Feyerabend 1986, that angry young man of post-modern thought, has hailed the "Aggregatcharakter der Homerischen Welt." In archaic Greek religion and culture in general, so he argues, there was an opportunistic eclecticism:

> There is no *insight* which grasps a unity behind this plurality, no *truth* which—beyond individual facts—has a bearing on such a unity. There are *insights* and *truths* (plural), gained in different situations and in different ways and valid according to the laws that apply to these situations. Knowledge is the sum or the list of all insights gathered from all fields.[202]

I could not agree more. He may overstress his point a bit, but, then, don't we all? The early Greeks may have some interesting lessons for us. No solutions, but 'ways we say it'.

More than anywhere else in this book it is at this occasion that I wish to recall a phrase from the Introduction:

---

[202] "Es gibt keine *Erkenntniss*, die eine Einheit hinter der Vielfalt erfasst, keine *Wahrheit*, die sich nicht nur auf individuelle Sachverhalte, sondern auf eine solche Einheit bezöge, aber es gibt *Kenntnisse* und Wahrheiten, in verschiedenen Situationen auf verschiedene Weise gewonnen und geltend nach dem für diese Situationen zuständigen Gesetze. *Wissen* ist die *Summe*, oder die *Liste* aller so gewonnenen Erkenntnisse aus allen Bereichen," adding (217): "In einer solchen Welt, die aus relativ selbständigen Teilen besteht, ist die Annahme universellen Gesetze *nicht sachgemäss* und die Forderung nach universellen Normen tyrannisch" (italics by the author. My translation differs from that of *Farewell to Reason* [London 2007] 98). It is striking how closely this resembles the words by Jolles 1930, 155 f. where he makes a differentiation between systematic philosophical truth and empirical-gnomic truth: "Wenn wir die Welt begreifen als eine Mannigfaltigkeit von Einzelwahrnehmungen und Einzelergebnissen, ergeben zwar diese Wahrnehmungen und Ergebnisse, reihenweise erfaßt und zusammengefaßt, jeweils *die Erfahrung*, aber auch die Summe dieser Erfahrungen bleibt eine Mannigfaltigkeit von Einzelheiten. (.....). Zwar gibt es auch hier ein Trennen und Verbinden (...) aber in den Bindungen überwiegt die Trennung, in den Bezogenheiten bleibt das Nebeneinander, in den Ordnungen die Sonderung der Glieder bestehen. Kurz, diese Welt ist nicht Kosmos, sie ist Sonderung, sie ist Empirie." Cf. another plea for such a type of pluralism in mythological context: O. Marquard, Lob des Polytheismus. Über Monomythie und Polymythie, in: H. Poser (ed.), *Philosophie und Mythos. Ein Kolloquium* (Berlin – New York 1979) 40–58, espec. 46: "*Bekömmlich ist Polymythie, schädlich ist Monomythie.* Wer polymythisch—durch Leben und Erzählen—an vielen Geschichten teilnimmt, hat durch die jeweils eine Geschichte Freiheit von der jeweils anderen (.....); wer monomythisch nur an einer einzigen Geschichte teilnehmen darf und muss, hat diese Freiheit nicht: er ist ganz und gar mit Haut und Haar von ihr besessen. Wegen dieses Zwangs zur restlosen Identität mit dieser Alleingeschichte verfällt er narrativer Atrophie. ...."

> I often have the impression that we exploit our classical texts as tools to show how clever *we* are in interpreting them, meanwhile imposing our strain towards coherence on their literary expressions, and thus paving our road towards the professorate (if not the Sather professorate). It would not be a bad idea at all if for once we would read their texts in what currently seems to be felt as a wayward manner, for example in order to see how *they* coped with questions that our paradigm still does not allow us to solve.

In contemporary Christian theology the division of theodicy is by far the most endangered of the whole concern, in fact it is close to bankruptcy and runs a fair risk of being closed down in the near future.[203] How desperate the situation is can be learned for instance from an influential book on that subject written by one of the most distinguished specialists, Richard Swinburne. This modern apologete does regret all that human sorrow and suffering but extenuatingly argues for its utility in 'soul-making' in terms of its service to developing moral and religious virtues. *And,* to guild the pill, the Lord in his endless wisdom and love has put a limit to suffering, by decreeing that human life should not exceed 80 or 90 years: "Nobody can suffer more than 80 years."[204] Quite some change, for that matter, after

---

[203] K. Surin, Theodicy? *HThR* 76 (1983) 225: "Despite the efforts of these and other theologians, the thought persists in many quarters that theodicy is perhaps one of the least satisfactory areas of the theological enterprise."

[204] R. Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil* (Oxford 1998) 232: "God has ensured that there is a limit to the amount any human can suffer on Earth (…) The primary limit is provided by the safety barrier of death. God *only* (my italics) allows humans to suffer for periods of up to eighty years or thereabouts." And an extra stroke of luck: "Under too much pain we often become unconscious." Whoever is not satisfied with these two solutions of the problem may consult the showering of different answers to the problem of evil in a study of the greatest authority in the field: J.H. Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (London 1977[2], 2007[3]), who, in his turn is an easy prey for his fellow theologians, whose own solutions, as for instance the so-called 'process theodicy', however, do not impress me as really more compelling. See e.g. D.R. Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil: A Process Theodicy* (Philadelphia 1976) and his frontal attack on Hick's theories in: St. T. Davis (ed.), *From Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy* (Atlanta 1981). Cf. C.R. Mesle, *John Hick's Theodicy: A Process Humanist Critique* (London 1991). The problem is of course directly corollary to the belief in a god who is both almighty and good. Kennith Surin *o.c.* (preceding note) defines theodicy as the attempt to "reconcile the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient, and morally perfect God with the existence of evil" (on this crucial question see also below Ch. V p. 394 f., with nn. 42 and 46). This is most obvious in the world of the bible, as is revealingly elucidated in A. Laato & J.C. de Moor (edd.), *Theodicy in the World of the Bible* (Leiden – Boston 2003), where the editors distinguish six categories of theodicy, each of which was activated whenever another did not seem to work: retributive theodicy; educative theodicy; eschatological theodicy; the mystery of theodicy; communion

Martin Luther who liked to view God as wearing a mask and behind that mask playing with man as a cat plays with a mouse. In so doing he hurts man, admittedly, but, as Luther soothingly adds, "Er meint's nicht" ("He does not *mean* it"). Desperate and repellent explanations of grief and misery are moulded into conflicting dogmas as a result of our separative cosmology.

If then among the modern faithful with all their dogmas, credo, articles of faith, and catechism, there is no trace of uniformity concerning the problem of theodicy, why do we expect Greeks of the archaic and early classical periods to have had a clearer perception or a more consistent belief in the unfathomable ways of divine providence? I must admit that I have always found such assumptions as impertinent as they are incomprehensible. They tend to dehumanize my Greeks. As *human beings* Greeks were like you and me, exposed to the same uncertainties and doubts as any other human being that is confronted with the dazzling riddles of sudden inscrutable catastrophes. As *Greeks*, however, they were "others" and both the organization and the phrasing of their reactions is fundamentally different. Perhaps, for that very reason, we should try to learn from our Greeks instead of patronizing them.

---

theodicy; human determinism. The whole book is one never ending illustration of humans' desperate attempts to come to terms with the idea of the (in)justice of god in a monotheistic system.

CHAPTER THREE

ONE GOD
THREE GREEK EXPERIMENTS IN ONENESS*

> Ik hou niet van 'één.' 'Eén' is zo'n eenzaam woord (I do not like 'one'. 'One' is such a lonesome word).
>
> Liselot (5 year)

> ὅθεν καὶ τῶν κατὰ τὸν βίον οἱ μὲν ἕνα φασὶν εἶναι θεόν, οἱ δὲ πολλοὺς καὶ διαφόρους ταῖς μορφαῖς (Hence ordinary people differ also, some saying that there is one god, others that there are many gods and of various shapes).
>
> Sext. Emp. *Pyr*. 3.219

1. Introduction

Ancient Greek religion was, as we have seen in our first chapter, unashamedly polytheistic. Hence the subject of the present chapter, that of 'oneness' in Greek religion Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic, may come as a surprise. I will discuss three Greek modes of bypassing, negotiating, reconciling, in short of coping with the alarming complexity of divine manifestations. The three relevant sections are entitled: "One and many," "Many is one," and "One is the god." The first concerns the Archaic, the last the Hellenistic period, the second discusses a phenomenon that can be found throughout Greek history. All three are 'experiments in oneness', which, on the face of it, attempt to redefine a diversity of phenomena as being basically a unity. I hope to show, however, that none of these theologies aims at fusing the polytheistic plurality itself into one unifying system or structure. Rather, in each of them, though in singularly different ways, the plurality and

---

* This title is both an indication of what this chapter is about and an allusion to my book *TER UNUS* (1990), on which the third section of the present chapter leans heavily and to which in this chapter I shall refer by its title in order to avoid an irritating repetition of 'Versnel 1990'. I wish to express my deep gratitude to Barbara Porter for her scrutiny in trying to clear the text of an earlier version (published in Porter 2000, 79–163) from flaws and barbarisms in the English and even more for her acute comments on lack of clarity in argument or composition as well as for her numerous suggestions for improvement.

multiformity of polytheism remains unaffected: 'the many gods' do not merge into 'the one' nor are they explained as emanations or aspects of the one. Both, many and one, maintain a more or less independent position in the conceptual world of the believers.[1]

As a matter of fact, my exposition sprouts from a critical reflection on the dogmatic modern idea(l?) of 'unity in diversity', often advanced with more conviction than supportive argument. The axiom, endorsed by many a specialist, that the Greeks perceived an underlying unity in the diversity of religious phenomena,[2] in fact leaves us with more questions than answers. What, precisely, do scholars *mean* by such an assertion as for instance in the words of Walter Burkert "the whole

---

[1] This may also serve as a clarification of the position I defend in *TER UNUS*, which Price 1999, 11 n. 3 seriously misrepresents when he ranges me among those scholars who "have sought to 'rescue' polytheism by arguing for an element of monolatry or henotheism, in which the power of one god in the pantheon is proclaimed as supreme." If, as becomes apparent in recent scholarly discussion (e.g. Athanassiadi & Frede 1999; Mitchell & Van Nuffelen 2010), I indeed have contributed to reanimating the study of henotheistic tendencies in Greek religion, the very last objective of that was thus to "rescue polytheism" (nor to attack it, for that matter).

[2] Or, at the least, did not experience a divide between the two. Just a few instances out of many: E. Meyer, *Geschichte des Altertums* III (1937) 706: "In Griechenland vollends hat die Frage, ob ein Gott oder viele Götter, kaum eine Rolle gespielt; ob die göttliche Macht als Einheit oder als Vielheit gedacht wird, ist irrelevant…."; Th. Zielinski, *La religion de la Grèce antique* (transl. Paris 1926) 125 f.: "dans le domaine divin, l'unité et la multiplicité se confondent"; Rudhardt 1966, 355: "ce qui est essentiel au polythéisme, c'est que l'unité du divin et la pluralité des noms ou des figures divines, la pluralité des dieux, ne sont pas senties par eux comme contradictoire." And so on and so forth. Gladigow 1990b, 249 f., already argued against such an "alle Lebenszüge umfassenden Sinntotalität" as generally attributed to pre-modern societies by sociologists of religion. In anthropology the quest for wholeness is under critical discussion. See e.g. K.P. Ewing, The Illusion of Wholeness: Culture, Self, and the Experience of Inconsistency, *Ethos* 18 (1990) 251–278. The author suggests that the observer will always maintain *the illusion* of wholeness, despite the presence of multiple inconsistent self-representations that are context-dependent and may shift rapidly. Confronted with inconsistencies, they are "adept at using multiple rhetorical strategies, relying on ambiguity and tropes to establish a position." Even more essentially I.C. Jarvie, *Rationality and Relativism: In Search of a Philosophy and History of Anthropology* (London 1984) 15, censures the anthropologists's drive to find integrity of society and culture: the apparently 'irrational' behaviour and conceptions of the alien culture are made harmless by taking them as elements of a holistic system which in itself is after all "ordinary in its own right." Or cf. M. Strathern, Out of Context: The Persuasive Fictions of Anthropology, *Current Anthropology* 28 (1987) 251–281, espec. 260, who scorns the anthropologist's main task as "how to manipulate familiar ideas and concepts to convey alien ones." All this implies that cultures are not the coherent systems they have been assumed to be. Nor are their theologies. See also below n. 230.

is more than the sum of the parts"?[3] And how do you prove such a general statement? Before we can answer these questions, our first task should be to examine *how* the very concepts of unity and plurality relate to each other in Greek perception.[4]

The three experiments in oneness that I shall discuss differ in their points of departure (in terms of historical setting, intellectual climate and social support), in their cosmological presuppositions and implications, and in the nature of the discourse in which they are embedded. Only one of them, the first, explicitly proclaimed a (more or less) overtly monotheistic theology. None of them solved and, as I hope to show, no one endeavoured to solve the problems haunting polytheism.

Because the terms cannot be avoided in our discussion, it may be expedient at this point to give my very provisional and personal working definitions of monotheism and henotheism[5] in their 'ideal' forms. By *monotheism* I shall understand:

> the conviction that only one god exists (involving the cultic corollary of exclusive worship), while other gods do not, or, if and as far as they do, must be *made* inexistent, for instance by relegating them beyond the political or cultic horizon of the community and attributing to them the status of powerless, wicked or demonic forces without any (real) significance.

The paradoxical qualifier in this working definition, beginning with "if and as far as they do….," dramatically exposes the author's doubt whether one can ever speak of *pure* monotheism[6] except for a few

---

[3] Burkert 1985, 216.

[4] Judging by the wealth of studies listed in the following footnotes, I have the impression that the 'unity and diversity' polarity—which is not necessarily identical to 'one and many'—is more fundamentally problematized in studies of Egyptian and Near Eastern religions, in particular that of ancient Israel. See the recent collection of fundamental studies in Porter 2000.

[5] Of course one can find hosts of variant definitions and discussions in the relevant entries of the well-known encyclopedias of religion. See e.g.: F. Baumgärtel, Monotheismus und Polytheismus, *RGG*[3] IV (1960) 1109–1115; R. Hülsewiesche, Monotheismus, *HWP* VI (1984) 142–146; Chr. Schwöbel, Monotheismus, *ThR* 23 (1994) 233–262; C. Gunton, Monotheismus und Polytheismus, *RGG*[4] V (2002) 1457–1467; Th.M. Ludwig, Monotheism, *Encyclopedia of Religion*[2] IX (2005) 6155–6163; J. Assmann, Monotheism and Polytheism, in: Johnston 2004, 17–31.

[6] On this issue see below n. 227.

sectors of Islamic, Jewish,[7] Christian[8] and, more generally, philosophical systems. It is also the result of an attempt to accommodate the

[7] Primarily in what Morton Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament* (repr. New York 1971) called "The Yahweh Alone Party" as practically exclusively represented in (sections of) the book of Deuteronomy. Elsewhere monotheism is not the correct term for Jewish theology. First, there is the uncomfortable co-existence of God and the Hosts of Angels, as among others demonstrated by H. Corbin, *Le paradoxe du monothéisme* (Paris 1991 = 1981); P. Hayman, Monotheism—A Misused Word in Jewish Studies? *Journal of Jewish Studies* 42 (1991) 1–15; K. Koch, Monotheismus und Angelologie, in: Dietrich & Klopfenstein 1994, 565–581. Most probably, it was ancient Canaanitic gods who continued their existence in the biblical angels, often in a rather caustic polemic with Yahweh. Cf. P. Schäfer, *Rivalität zwischen Engeln und Menschen* (Berlin 1975). A. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven* (Leiden 1977) and D. Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot* (Tübingen 1988) argue for a 'cooperative dualism' between Yahweh and El at first, while later the place of vice-regent was taken by other powers, such as Michael. Secondly, there is the awkward female partner of Jahweh by name of Ashera, whose appearance in recently found inscriptions seems to have inspired OT scholars with a new spurt of courage to acknowledge what is (and was already long) obvious. See: J.M. Hadley, in: Dietrich & Klopfenstein 1994, 235–268; *eadem*, *DDD* s.v. Asherah; *eadem, The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah: Evidence for a Hebrew Goddess* (Cambridge 2000). For the general discussion concerning the definition of Israelite monotheism in various periods of its history, one may consult (and observe the gradual, but fundamental, shifts in appreciation in): Rose 1975; O. Keel (ed.), *Monotheismus im alten Israel und seiner Umwelt* (Fribourg 1980); B. Lang (ed.), *Der einzige Gott. Die Geburt des biblischen Monotheismus* (Munich 1981); E. Haag (ed.), *Gott, der einzige. Zur Entstehung des Monotheismus in Israel* (Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1985); J.H. Tigay, *You Shall Have No Other Gods. Israelite Religion in the Light of Hebrew Inscriptions* (Atlanta 1986); E.B. Borowitz, *The Many Meanings of 'God is One'* (New York 1988); J.C. de Moor, *The Rise of Yahwism* (Leuven 1990); M.S. Smith, *The Early History of God. Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (San Francisco 1990); Dietrich & Klopfenstein 1994; F. Stolz, *Einführung in den biblischen Monotheismus* (Darmstadt 1996); R.K. Gnuse, *No Other Gods. Emergent Monotheism in Israel* (Sheffield 1997); M. Weippert, *Jahwe und die anderen Götter: Studien zur Religionsgeschichte des antiken Israel in ihrem syrisch-palästinischen Kontext* (Tübingen 1997); Oeming & Schmid 2003.

[8] See for instance a curious statement by the (not so very) monotheistic Paul. In 1 Cor. 8:4–6, he says that "we know that (…) there is no God but one," which obviously implies a monotheistic conception. However, this phrase is immediately followed by: "For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many gods and many lords—yet for us there is one God …" (See also below n. 144). On this text see illuminatingly: J. Woyke, Das Bekenntnis zum einzig allwirksamen Gott und Herrn und die Dämonisierung von Fremdkulten: Monolatrischer und polylatrischer Monotheismus in 1 *Korinther* 8 und 10, in: J. Rüpke (ed.), *Gruppenreligionen im römischen Reich. Sozialformen, Grenzziehungen und Leistungen* (Tübingen 2007) 87–112. Early Christian monotheism was as precarious as that of the religion of early Israel. For New Testament 'monotheism' see: B.J. Pietaert Peerbolte, Jewish Monotheism and Christian Origins, in: A. Houtman, A. de Jong & M. Misses-Van de Weg (edd.), *Empsychoi Logoi. Religious Innovations in Antiquity. Studies in Honour of P.W. van der Horst* (Leiden 2008) 227–246. For early Christianity see e.g. MacMullen 1984, index s.v. monotheism.

concept of monolatry[9] (exclusive worship of one god without explicit denial of the existence of other gods)[10]—which, too, is relevant to a very restricted number of religions, most specifically the one of Israel—with the larger and more universally applicable notion of monotheism. Of course, many differentiations such as 'exclusive', 'inclusive', 'pluriform' or 'temporary' monotheism have been proposed.[11]

In using the term monotheism (as well as its opposite polytheism)[12] in terms of an 'etic' definitional and distinctive concept one should continuously be aware that the notion actually originated as an 'emic' construct in Christian theology. After its birth in antiquity (Philo), the term is, in modern times, first attested in the work of Henry More (1660).[13] From the 18th century onwards it acquired its dogmatic and exclusivist status as marker of the identity of Old and New Testament religious thought, especially under the influence of Schleiermacher.[14]

In accordance with the evidence that I shall present in the third part of this chapter, *henotheism*[15] may be defined as:

---

[9] For an excellent and critical account of the history of monolatry (and henotheism) as technical terms see: R. Mackintosh, Monolatry and henotheism, *ERE* VIII (1915) 810 ff. Cf. more recently: Rose 1975, 9–13, Exkurs: Henotheismus, Monolatrie, Monotheismus.

[10] Although in scholarly discussion henotheism and monolatry are often connected (e.g. Chr. Auffarth, Henotheism/Monolatrie, in: *HrwG* III [1993] 104 f.), in my definition monolatry is *not* "Praktizierung des henotheismus:" W. Holsten, Monolatrie, in: *RGG*[3] IV (1960) 1106. Here I rather follow F. Heiler, *Erscheinungsformen und Wesen der Religion* (Stuttgart 1961), 323; Rose 1975, 10, and others.

[11] See e.g. on various forms of 'inclusive monotheism' and 'pluriform monotheism' as he coined it: Th.P. van Baaren, Pluriform Monotheism, *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 20 (1965–66) 321–327. Recent works (as above n. 1) tend to use the notion 'monotheism' for both pagan and Christian trends in late antiquity. See the sensible discussion in Fürst 2006.

[12] For which see above Chapter I p. 24.

[13] Hülsewiesche *o.c.* (above n. 5) 142 f.; Stolz *o.c.* (above n. 7) 22 ff.

[14] "Erst Friedrich Schleiermacher mit seiner Einleitung zur zweite Auflage der Glaubenslehre von 1830/1831 hat den Begriff und die Sache des "monotheismus" zu einem identitätsbildenden Merkmal von Judentum, Christentum und Islam gemacht," thus Markschies 2002, 215. Fundamentally on this development: Gladigow 2002, with further literature, and G. Ahn, Monotheismus und Polytheismus als religionsgeschichtliche Kategorien? in: Oeming & Schmid 2003, 1–10, who opens his paper with a section: "Die Verschränkung emischer und etischer Perspektiven in der europäischen Religions- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte."

[15] The term 'henotheismus', first introduced by F.J.W. Schelling in the sense of "relatively rudimentary monotheism," was canonized (and used interchangeably with 'kathenotheismus') by Max Müller in order to indicate, in a polytheistic context, the momentaneous and selective adoration of one god, who, for that specific moment of devotion, is exclusively honoured with all available predicates. See: M. Yusa, Henotheism, *ER* VI (1987) 266–7. For the application of the term in the study of Egyptian

> the privileged devotion to one god, who is regarded as uniquely superior, while other gods are neither depreciated nor rejected and continue receiving due cultic observance whenever this is ritually required.[16]

While monotheism by its definition is supposed to be a permanent and non-intermittent awareness, only coming to an end when the believer loses his monotheistic conviction, henotheism may be either permanent, for instance in a cult group round one god, or restricted to a specific moment in personal adoration.[17] For instance, a hymn to one god may be regarded as a henotheistic moment in a polytheistic context.[18] These definitions imply that boundaries are fluid. It is even to be feared that they will not suffice to cover the whole spectrum of 'oneness'. The introduction of the paradoxical notion 'non-exclusive monotheism' may help us out of the deadlock.

2. One and Many: The God(s) of Xenophanes

> Εἷς θεὸς ἔν τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστος,
> οὔ τι δέμας θνητοῖσιν ὁμοίιος οὐδὲ νόημα
> (One god [*Heis theos*] among gods and men (the) greatest,
> neither in form nor in thought resembling mortal beings).

This is the astounding proclamation issued round the middle of the sixth century BC by the Ionian philosopher Xenophanes of Kolophon (B 23),[19] who has been lauded as "a paradigm of the pre-socratic

---

religion: Hornung 1971, 233. For its occurrence in Graeco-Roman religion: *TER UNUS* and below section 4. Recently, Eich 2010, espec. in the section "Polytheismus, Monotheismus, Henotheismus" (pp. 101–110) gives a clear summary of the problems of definition, largely accepting my own earlier suggestions.

[16] "The expression of a relationship with a privileged divinity. Instead of being structured solely according to a contractual votive ritualism, this expression enhanced the theological quality and ontology of the power invoked, frequently as a result of a direct personal experience," as Belayche 2010, 146 has it.

[17] The latter is basically Max Müller's interpretation of the concept, which is also referred to as 'affective monotheism'. A. van Selms, in: M.A. Beek *et alii* (edd.), *Symbolae Biblicae et Mesopotamicae M.Th de Liagre Böhl dedicatae* (Leiden 1973) 341–348, introduced the term 'temporary henotheism' in an article under the same title. He refers to situations in Mesopotamia and Israel (e.g. *Epic of Atrahasis*, I, 376–383, Dan. 6:8) in which it is stipulated that *for a certain period of time* only one god will receive adoration.

[18] After all, Müller's conceptualization of the notion henotheism was grounded in the unique attention of the hymn to one god. Cf. Stolz *o.c.* (above n. 7) 44 f.

[19] The basic edition and standard for the numeration of his fragments as well as of those of all other Presocratic philosophers is: H. Diels & W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente*

genius" and "ein Revolutionär des Geistes"[20] on the one hand, and relativized as a person that "would have smiled if he had known that one day he was to be regarded as a theologian," on the other.[21]

The statement is as surprising for its revolutionary religious innovation[22] as for the inconsistency it conceals. In his violent revolt against the excrescences of anthropomorphic polytheism[23] Xenophanes postulated one supreme Deity, who was completely immovable, unimaginable,

---

der Vorsokratiker (Berlin 1951[6], cited as D.-K.). The numbers preceded by a B refer to the fragments in this edition. Fundamental also: G.S. Kirk, J.E. Raven & M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts* (Cambridge 1983[2], cited as KRS), with English translations. The Greek texts also in: J. Edmonds, *Greek Elegy and Iambus* (Cambridge Mass.-London 1931) I, 182–215, and in J. Mansfeld, *Die Vorsokratiker. Griechisch-Deutsch: Auswahl der Fragmente* (Stuttgart 1987). Further editions of Xenophanean fragments and commentaries: M. Untersteiner, *Senofane. Testimonianze e frammenti* (Florence 1956); E. Heitsch, *Xenophanes: Die Fragmente* (Munich-Zürich 1983) with German translation; J.H. Lesher, *Xenophanes of Colophon. Fragments: A Text and Translation with a Commentary* (Toronto-London 1992). Two annotated bibliographical surveys: L. Paquet, M. Roussel, Y. Lafrance, *Les présocratiques. Bibliographie analytique 1879–1980,* I (Paris 1988) 421–443; L.E. Navia, *The Presocratic Philosophers. An Annotated Bibliography* (New York-London 1993) 619–648.

[20] Barnes 1979, 82 and K. Ziegler, Xenophanes von Kolophon, ein Revolutionär des Geistes, *Gymnasium* 72 (1965) 289–302, respectively.

[21] Burnet 1930, 129. Cf. D. Babut, *La religion des philosophes grecs* (Paris 1974) 26: "Mais qu'il ne soit pas un philosophe comme les autres n'autorise pas à le transformer en théologicien: c'est en philosophe qu'il essaie d'élaborer un concept satisfaisant du divin…". Contra: E.g. Mansfeld 1987, 209: "zu Recht verdankt er seinen Ruhm der Einführung eines neuen, sublimierten Gottesbegriff;" Schäfer 1996, 144, on X.'s theology: "Der Kolophonier selbst dürfte sie wohl als das Herzstück seines gesamten Denkens aufgefaßt haben."

[22] With this I do not wish to deny that similar initiatives may have been attempted before in different cultures, for instance in the Near East. See Simo Parpola's work, summarized by himself in his paper 'Monotheism in Ancient Assyria', in: Porter 2000, 165–209 (cf. espec. his 'The Assyrian Tree of Life: Tracing the Origins of Jewish Monotheism and Greek Philosophy, *JNE* 52 (1993) 161–208) but see the criticism by Porter, *ibid.* 211–271. Cf. more recently the survey by M.S. Smith, *God in Translation* (Tübingen 2008) Ch. 3.2. "One-God": Worldviews in Mesopotamia and Israel and Their Lack of Translatability (pp. 149–179). On the other hand, *sub specie aeternitatis* and accordingly neglecting the historical perspective, Feyerabend 1986 denies both the revolutionary innovation *and* the value of Xenophanes' initiatives. See below: p. 265.

[23] Cf. B 11: "It was Homer and Hesiod who attributed to the gods all sorts of things which are matters of reproach and censure among men: theft, adultery, and mutual deceit;" B 14: "But mortals suppose that gods are born, and have clothes and speech and bodies like their own;" B 15: "If horses or oxen or lions had hands and could make drawings with their hands and accomplish such works as men, horses would draw the figures of gods as similar to horses, and oxen as similar to oxen, and they would lend them a physical appearance like their own;" B 16: "Ethiopians say that their gods are snub-nosed and black; Thracians that theirs are blue-eyed and red-haired."

and predominantly characterized as (being or having) a Great Mind (*Nous*), swaying the universe through thought alone.[24]

To serve the reader and as a basis for further reference I here give the much quoted list of "seven dogmas whose ascription to Xenophanes is secured by actual fragments from his poems" as formulated by Barnes 1982, 85:

1) God is motionless.
2) God is ungenerated.
3) 'There is one god, greatest among gods and men.'
4) God is not anthropomorphic.
5) God thinks and perceives 'as a whole.'
6) God moves things by the power of his mind.
7) God is morally perfect.

In some aspects of his theory the influence of his Ionian predecessors is unmistakable, but the two major components of his theological system—the rejection of anthropomorphism and the embracing of one abstract divinity—are drawn with unique rigour and explicitness. Consequently, surveying this momentous theological initiative the reader cannot but be shocked when confronted with the wording of the most influential Xenophanean postulate, already quoted in the beginning of this section but very much worth repeating and analyzing in more detail (B 23):[25]

---

[24] Cf. B 23, quoted in the beginning of this section; B 26 and 25: "Always he remains in the same place, moving not at all; nor is it fitting for him to go to different places at different times; but without toil he moves all things by the thought of his mind;" B 24 "As whole he sees, as whole he comprehends, as whole he hears."

[25] Recent decades witnessed the rise of a debate on the authenticity of these lines. For general discussion of the reliability of what later authors have handed down as the *ipsissima verba* of Xenophanes: C. Osborne, *Rethinking Early Greek Philosophy: Hippolytus of Rome and the Presocratics* (Ithaca 1987), on which see the critical reviews by J. Barnes, *Phronesis* 33 (1988) 327–344, and A. Mourelatos, *Ancient Philosophy* 9 (1989) 111–117. More specifically, M.J. Edwards, Xenophanes Christianus?, *GRBS* 32 (1991) 219–228, argues that the majority of the verses quoted in the present paper are fabrications made by the Christian Clemens. The notion of *heis theos* in B 23 in particular seems suspicious to him, since it does not occur in any other Greek philosopher prior to Plato, while it is the cornerstone of many Christian and Jewish fabrications of late antiquity (on which see below). I cannot go into this discussion here. Practically no other scholar shares this viewpoint and, anyway, it remains that "to judge by his other doxographers, Xenophanes was not so partial to *heis* as to *hen,*" which suffices for my argument.

> One god among gods and men (the) greatest,[26]
> neither in form nor in thought resembling mortal beings.

These lines conceal, as I announced above, an inconsistency. How are we to explain that the first intransigent monist[27] of Greek philosophy admits through the back door what he has just previously ousted triumphantly through the front door? How to explain the contradiction, already looming in the presentation by Anaximenes, between the postulate of one all-embracing divine *arche* and the acceptance of a polytheistic world view, as apparent from the reference to '(the) gods'? Nor is this the only place where Xenophanes refers to the plural 'gods'.[28] But perhaps we should take a step back and first ask some preliminary questions. For instance, *is* our fragment proof of a monotheistic experiment, as is assumed by those scholars who praise Xenophanes as "the only genuine monotheist that ever existed."[29] In the words of Burnet 1930, 143:

> We cannot admit that Xenophanes conceded to the existence of subordinate or special gods; because it is exactly the existence of these gods that he had particularly in mind to deny.[30]

---

[26] Of course, classicists quarrel about the correct interpretation of this 'one' as cheerfully as do Old Testament scholars about "Israel, your God is one." Do the two lines contain *three* predicates (one, greatest, not resembling) or only two, with 'one' functioning as attribute? And so on and so forth. See the discussions in Stokes 1971, 76–79; Lesher 1992, 96–100; Schäfer 1996, 165 ff. There have been many attempts to 'dismonotheize' the expression *heis theos* by pointing out that a common Greek idiom uses *heis* to reinforce the superlative (which is true: see the third section of this chapter) and next arguing that, consequently, what is intended is: "the one greatest god" thus ruling out: "God is one, the greatest…" (which is less than compelling). To demonstrate the faultiness of this argument would require more space than I have available. I confine myself to the observations, first, that the complete doxography, including Aristotle and Theophrastus, understands these lines and the rest of Xenophanes' theology as unequivocally implying "God is one" and, second, that the all-embracing predicates in the several fragments quoted cannot but refer to a divine being that is not only infinitely *greater* than, but also and more important, *fundamentally different* from (supposed) other divine beings. I myself have tried to avoid a premature, all too explicit interpretation by not inserting the verbal form "is", which does not occur in the Greek text.

[27] Aristotle *Met*. A 5.986b21 calls Xenophanes the first "monist" (πρῶτος ἑνίσας), because "he said that the One was the god" (τὸ ἓν [neuter!] εἶναι τὸν θεόν) after having looked up at the whole universe."

[28] They are found in Fragments B 1.24; 11.1; 12.1; 14.1; 15.3; 16.1; 18.1; 34.2.

[29] U. von Wilamowitz, *Die griechische Literatur und Sprache* (Berlin 1905) 38.

[30] We will encounter various different arguments put forward to defend X.'s monotheistic conviction, even if the existence of other gods cannot be denied. Most of them require a generous dash of generosity on the side of the reader when confronted with a

Or should we, on the contrary, follow many scholars in calling into question:

> whether a convinced monotheist in an unreceptive polytheistic society would cloud the issue by a mention of plural gods which is at least ambiguous, in the very context where he is firmly stating his revolutionary view.[31]

Since this question—more especially the notion '*pure* monotheism'—is essential to my central argument, we will have to cast a quick glance into the scholarly discussion.[32] It will reveal how desperately—and diversely—scholars have struggled to elicit a coherent meaning from these two lines, squirming in their attempts to defend the text against the most fatal charge imaginable in Academia: lack of consistency.

1. *One or many?*

By way of introduction I select three different assessments taken from three of the best-known textbooks.[33] Burkert, in a characteristically clear and well considered summary, writes:

> What sounds like monotheism is nevertheless drawing on entirely customary formulae: one is the greatest and for that very reason is not alone.

---

very modern logical argumentation applied to reconcile the ambivalence. Barnes 1982, 91 f., for instance, excels in an Oxford type of algebraic logic in order to arrive at his conclusion: "Xenophanes, I conclude was a monotheist, as the long tradition has it; (….) like later Christian theologians, he argued on purely logical grounds that there could not be a plurality of gods." A different, very popular and less vulnerable, method is to downplay the importance of the 'normal' gods. One for all: Mansfeld 1987, 210, "die anderen Götter sind aber, verglichen mit dem grössten, kaum bedeutend." In a different vein Heitsch 1994, 15, "Der Fehler, den Xenophanes zu sehen meint, liegt daher nicht darin, dass die einen oder anderen Völker falsche Vorstellungen von den Göttern haben, sondern darin dass sie sich überhaupt Bilder machen."

[31] Stokes 1971, 76, inferring that the fragment cannot be reconciled with a pure monotheism. Some go much farther in their doubt. Babut 1974 even contests the common opinion that Xenophanes' theological views constitute a radical departure from the religious mythologies of Homer and Hesiod. Cf. *idem, La religion des philosophes grecs* (Paris 1974) 22–27. In the same year and in a similar vein: Eisenstadt 1974. So, here, the conclusion may be—quite contrary to, but no less firm than the one of Barnes cited in the preceding note—: "Gegen den Tenor traditioneller Untersuchungen muß daher eindeutig festgestellt werden, daß Xenophanes *kein* Monotheist ist" (Schäfer 1996, 167).

[32] For a summarizing discussion, apart from the ones mentioned above nn. 30 and 31, see: A. Lefka, The Xenophanean Religious Thought: A Field of Various Interpretations, *Kernos* 2 (1989) 89–96. Cf. also Zajcev 1996, 204 f.

[33] Burkert 1985, 308, KRS 170, and Jaeger 1947, 43 f., respectively.

On the other hand, Kirk, Raven & Schofield comment:

> 'Greatest among gods and men' should not be taken literally; men are mentioned by a 'polar' usage. This is simply an emphatic device,[34] and for the same reason the plural of 'gods' need not be intended literally.

Even so, they continue: "In fact Xenophanes wrote of 'gods' in other places also; partly, no doubt, this was a concession, perhaps not a fully conscious one, to popular religious terminology."

Jaeger, finally, states:

> But while he extols this God as more than human, he also describes him explicitly as 'the greatest among gods and men.' This manner of speaking, with its polar juxtaposition of gods and men, follows the old epic formulas; nevertheless it still makes it perfectly clear that besides the One God there must be others, just as there are men.

However, according to Jaeger, these other gods could *not* be the anthropomorphic Homeric ones and it was *not* Xenophanes' intention to compromise with popular religion.[35] Rather we should think of Thales' dictum "that all things are full of gods." Conclusion: "In any case the one all-embracing God is so far superior to all the other lesser divine forces that he alone could really seem important to Xenophanes." In our terminology, Jaeger seems to opt for a henotheistic solution.

How very revealing are these desperate attempts to come to terms with an undeniable and irritating clash of One and Many in two coherent lines of a professed 'monist'![36] After the well-nigh arithmetical

---

[34] Indeed, Greek poetry abounds in polar expressions meant to denote a totality, not seldom producing curiously absurd results. KRS mention for instance Heraclitus Fr. 30 who says that the world-order was made by "none of gods or men." Add for instance Creon in Sophocles' *Antigone,* who says: "Go, go now, servants, those present and those absent." G. Müller, *Sophokles Antigone* [Heidelberg 1967] *ad loc.* explains the "Unlogik" by Creon's desperate haste. However, there are numerous parallels for these illogical polarities. See Eur. *HF* 1106 with von Wilamowitz' note; Eur. *Hipp.* with Barrett's note; Soph. *El.* 305; Plaut. *Trin.* 360.

[35] Jaeger 1947, 44. Here he is followed by Nilsson *GGR* I[3] 742: "nicht die Götter der Volksreligion." This is a 'dagger to the hand' of those scholars who wish to coat the pill of a persistent polytheism in an otherwise monotheistic theology. If the other gods do continue their existence Xenophanes must have viewed them as: "in neuer, von Unordentlichem und Menschlich-Gestalthaftem gereinigter Form als Figuren eines zu reformierenden Kultus" (Mansfeld 1987, 211), or as "von Anthropomorphismen und ethischen Defekten gereinigten personalen göttlichen Mächten" (Schäfer 1996, 165).

[36] The uneasiness concerning the contradiction is ubiquitous. Two examples: Guthrie 1962, 375, regretfully qualifies it as "at the least a surprising carelessness." Schäfer

inference that the superlative qualification 'the greatest' necessarily presupposes the existence of other (lesser) gods, we see two diametrically opposed strategies to negotiate the blatant contradiction that thus emerges: a centrifugal versus a centripetal one. The first[37] tries to resolve the inconsistency by explaining it away: the mention of gods is nothing more than a rhetorical concession, not referring to anything 'really real'. At most it is a tactical concession to popular religious tradition, which, by implication, in his heart Xenophanes must have vehemently opposed.[38] The other approach offers an explanation in terms of what the Germans call *Hineininterpretation*, whence referred to as centripetal by me. It helpfully trots out a homemade theological system in order to make it all logically acceptable: there are indeed more gods but they cannot have been the traditional Olympians. The one great deity and the other lesser gods form a kind of hierarchy,[39] in which the normal traditional—or the not so normal revised type of gods—are described as emanations, representatives or parts of the central 'one'.[40]

1996, 164: "*Leider* spricht Xenophanes (23) tatsächlich in einer sehr ambivalenten Weise von "Gott" und "Götter" in einem Atemzug" (my italics).

[37] Last refuge to many a scholar including such celebrities as Zeller, Burnet, Diels-Kranz, followed by François 1957, 167, where one can find the earlier literature.

[38] Mansfeld 1987, 211: "Zu vergleichen ist, dass auch spätere griechische Philosophen die Existenz der Götter des Kultes im allgemeinen nicht geleugnet haben, ungeachtet ihrer philosophischen Überzeugung, in der für solche Götter kaum oder überhaupt kein Platz war. Überdies vermied eine solche Gesinnung, auch bei Xenophanes, den Konflikt mit den von Staat wegen und privat geübten Kultgebräuchen."

[39] Cf. Mansfeld 1987, 210: The one god is their absolute sovereign. "Nur: dessen absolute Souveränität hebt die minderen Gottheiten weder in ihrer Existenz auf, noch beschneidet sie deren Verehrenswürdigkeit."

[40] For a survey of earlier adherents to this and similar ideas including: Gomperz, Decharme, Diès, Jaeger, Untersteiner, see François 1957, 166. More recently: Pötscher 1962, *l.c.* (below n. 56): "Der eine Gott ist in ihnen allen präsent"; B. Wisniewski, La conception de dieu chez Xenophane, *RCCM* 35 (1993) 211–218: "dieux (*theoi*) ne signifient pas une pluralité des dieux, mais les parties d'un seul et même dieu"; Chr. Eucken, Die Gotteserfassung im Symposion des Xenophanes, *Gymnasium* 19 (1993) 5–17, espec. 16: "Die vielen Götter (…) scheinen als Vermittler der für sich allein nicht absolut bestimmbaren höheren Vorstellung des einen Gottes zu dienen"; A. Drozdek, Xenophanes' Theology, *SIFC* Quarta serie, 2 (2004) 141–157, espec. 151: "the gods are only manifestations of the true, only God." Another solution, namely that "the gods" of Xenophanes must be "the elements and sun, moon and stars" (C. Kahn, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology* [New York 1960] 165 n. 3 and others) is incompatible with other elements in Xenophanes' theory, as Finkelberg 1990 146, correctly argues. This does not, however, necessarily entail the non-existence of the gods in Xenophanes' thought, as Finkelberg thinks.

This is not to say that such 'unity in diversity'[41] has never been proposed in antiquity. It was, most notably in Stoic[42] and later Neoplatonic systems.[43] Stoic theology indeed tended towards monotheism, with Zeus as the central God, but did not exclude the existence of other gods in addition to Zeus.[44] Zeus, however, is the only eternal god; the others originate and end with the cycle of the kosmos, when everything is consumed by fire and then regenerated. Accordingly, the Roman polymath Varro[45] claimed that all the gods were parts (*partes*)

---

[41] The idea that 'one principle (or one god) is all' did not immediately find much adherence and in the earlier period—as far as we can see—remained confined to Orphic and Eleatic circles. I cannot go into Xenophanes' possible relationship with the Eleatics. For this see: G. Cerri, Senofane ed Elea (una questione di metodo) *QUCC* 64 f. (2000) 31–50; J. Wiesner, Wissen und Skepsis bei Xenophanes, *Hermes* 125 (1997) 17–33; M. Bugno (ed.), *Senofane ed Elea tra Ionia e Magna Grecia* (Napoli 2005), Parte seconda: Senofane, Elea, gli Eleati (149–284). Nor can I discuss the monist par excellence Parmenides and the relationship between his and Xenophanes' theories. See for later 'monism' in Greek philosophy with emphasis on Plato: Rowe 1980, 54–67; P. Curd, *The Legacy of Parmenides. Eleatic Monism and Later Presocratic Thought* (Princeton 1998); J.A. Palmer, *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy* (Oxford 2009).

[42] See already Aristotle *Met*. 1074b3, arguing that the divine encompasses the whole of nature, and cf. *Mund*. 397b10–401b24, *Pol*. 1326a32, where god is the 'divine power' (*theia dunamis*) that 'holds everything together' as the informing principle of the kosmos, or Fr. 49, where he identifies god with mind, while "the rest is addition in the form of myth, in order to persuade the multitude and to be useful for laws and (private) interest."

[43] In later antiquity it was summarized by Servius *ad* Verg. *Georg*. I.5: "The Stoics say that there is only one god, one and the same power, which is called by different names in accordance with different functions."

[44] A.A. Long, *Epictetus. A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* (Oxford 2002) 144: "Because the Stoic divinity is everywhere, Stoic philosophers could accommodate gods in the plural. (….) Strictly, though, these gods are only symbolical ways of referring to the world's most powerful constituents all of which owe their existence to the single 'active' named God in the singular or Zeus." Cf. J. Mansfeld, Theology, in: Algra *et alii* (edd.), *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* (Cambridge 1999 = 2005) 461 ff.; M. Frede, Monotheism and Pagan Philosophy in Later Antiquity, in: Athanassiadi & Frede 1999, 51 ff.; K. Algra, Stoic Theology, in: B. Inwood (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (Cambridge 2003) 153–178, espec. 165–170; P.A. Meijer, *Stoic Theology: Proofs for the Existence of the Cosmic God and the Traditional Gods, Including a Commentary on Cleanthes' Hymn to Zeus* (Delft 2007). On Zeus as the 'one god' of Stoicism: *Idem*, *Hellenistic Philosophy* (London 1974) 149 f. So already in the famous Hymn to Zeus by the Stoic Cleanthes. Recent translations and discussions in: W. Cassidy, in: M. Kiley *et alii* (edd.), *Prayer from Alexander to Constantine: A Critical Anthology* (London 1997) 132–138, and J.C. Thom, *Cleanthes' Hymn to Zeus. Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Tübingen 2005); P.A. Meijer, *o.c.*

[45] In his *theologia tripertita* he distinguished three types of theology: the one transmitted by poets (*mythicon*, translated by Augustinus as *fabulosa*), the one taught by philosophy (*physicon*, latin: *naturale*), and the *theologia civilis* (transposed to the Greek situation: the religion of the *polis*). Fr. 10: *prima … theologia maxime accommodata est ad theatrum, secunda ad mundum, tertia ad urbem*. The latter one, being

or qualities (*virtutes*) of one central superior divine being, which he, too, identifies with Jupiter.[46] However, observing analogies between Xenophanean and Stoic theology is one thing, imposing the full system of the latter onto the former is another. The two are separated by centuries of increasingly sophisticated philosophical reflection. What is more, while we do have explicit knowledge of Stoic theory, there is no scrap of information on a supposed deeper coherence of the different types of gods in the few fragments of Xenophanes. On the contrary, the expression "greatest *among gods and men*" does little to encourage the reader to single out one of these two categories (the 'gods') for a special relationship to the One.

If so far we briefly discussed arguments advanced to vindicate monotheism for Xenophanean theology, it is both alarming and significant that exactly the same arguments have been put forward for rescuing Xenophanes for the sake of polytheism. Already in the late 19th century, Freudenthal[47] claimed that he could find nothing whatsoever that is indicative of monotheistic tendencies in Xenophanes. According to him Xenophanes professed a genuine polytheism, albeit one in which one central god—whom Freudenthal tended to identify as Zeus—reigns as a despot over his subject gods. As parts of the great God they reign over their own smaller sections of the world.[48]

---

the religion of cult and ritual, should have aspects of both others in order to suit the taste and intellectual level of the *vulgus*. B. Cardauns, *M. Terentius Varro. Antiquitates Rerum Divinarum I. Die Fragmente* (Abh. Ak Mainz 1976), Fr. 6–12, espec. 7 = Aug. *CD* 6.5, and the commentary at pp. 140 ff. See: G. Lieberg, Die Theologia Tripertita in Forschung und Bezeugung, *ANRW* I.4. (1973) 63–115; *idem*, The Theologia Tripertita as an Intellectual Model in Antiquity, *JIES Monographs* 4 (1984) 91–115; H. Dörrie, Zu Varros Konzeption der theologia tripertita in den *Antiquitates rerum divinarum*, in *Festschrift G. Radke* (Münster 1986) 76–82.

[46] Fr. 27 = August. *CD* 4.11, *omnes dii deaeque sit unus Iuppiter, sive sint, ut quidam volunt, omnia ista partes eius sive virtutes eius.* For a documentation of the 'one and all' theology of late antiquity see: Versnel 1990, 213–216.

[47] Freudenthal 1886, espec. 8–12; 16; 28–31. Of course, he met with fierce resistance by renowned contemporaries such as Zeller and Diels, who in their textbooks had proclaimed a 'pure monotheism', and felt little inclination to surrender. All the same, he found many followers as well. See: François 1957, 165 n. 1.

[48] For that matter, the idea of an omnipotent Being, transcending all the other powers in the world, even the gods themselves, was one which the epic writers had already associated with *their* highest god. Hom. *Il* 8.18–27 presents a striking instance of the absolute superiority of Zeus, which Aristotle *De motu an.* 4.700a even cites as the first intimation of the power of his 'unmoved mover'. See: Jaeger 1947, 46. For Homeric Epic as the cradle of monotheistic thought see already: H. Haas, Der Zug zum Monotheismus in den homerischen Epen und in den Dichtungen des Hesiod, Pindar, und Aeschylos, *ARW* 3 (1900) 153–183. M.L. West, in: Athanassiadi & Frede

What we see, then, is that both 'monotheist' and 'polytheist' partisans may acknowledge the co-existence of 'lesser gods' and 'the One God,' and, what is more, that they may describe the relationship of the two divine categories in similar terms. Monotheism and polytheism are just words, *our* words, for concepts each of which apparently can be applied to one and the same paradoxical ambiguity. Moreover, in both theories we encountered the same assumption that the One God and the many lesser gods together must have formed part and parcel of one coherent theology, viewed either as a hierarchy or as a unity in diversity. Now, to associate the two categories of gods in such a way is to devise a theological system, in this case *our* system, not seldom grounded in—or at least very comparable to—constructions known from ancient doxographic tradition which embraced the very same line of projection. There are strong reasons, however, for questioning the legitimacy of such a, generally unreflected, hermeneutic approach if there is no trace of reflection on the relationship of the two types of gods in the remaining fragments. To explain this silence one has a choice of two options. One is that the author has enunciated his ideas on the real nature of the 'other gods' (including their relation with the One) but the relevant parts of his work are lost. The other is that the author has not expressed an opinion, for instance because he never felt the inclination to pay explicit attention to the issue. It is amazing—and characteristic of our modern drive towards consistency—that the latter option, if considered at all, has never managed to secure an equal standing in the scholarly debate. The, often implicit, modish conviction is exemplarily expressed by Finkelberg 1990, 136:

1999, 21–40, espec. 22 ff., regards the motif of the assembly of the gods as the first step towards monotheism because it implies that "only one god counts." Various scholars of either school, the monotheist and the polytheist, regard Xenophanes as indebted to the Homeric notion of "the greatest god." Among many others: Heitsch 1994, 17; S. Broadie, in: Long 1999, 210 ff. Indeed, throughout Greek history, Zeus is not only superior to the other gods in degree, but he is also distinct in kind. Zeus, more than *primus inter pares*, stands above the rest of the pantheon. His supremacy at times approaches divine singularity, as, after many others, recently K. Dowden, *Zeus* (London-New York 2006) once more points out. For the Aeschylean Zeus as all-powerful and all-encompassing god see *i.a.* G. Calogero, Xenophanes, Aeschylos und die erste Definition der Allmacht Gottes, in *idem, Studien über Eleatismus* (Darmstadt 1970) 283–301; Jajcev 1996.

> At any rate, to saddle a thinker with inconsistencies and contradictions is not the best exegetical method, and before resorting to it, it is always advisable to investigate other possibilities.[49]

It will be hard to find a reader who would disagree with such a—both paradigmatic and axiomatic—truism. 'Of course' the modern interpreter should go as far as possible in trying to detect consistency in an author's thought. The alternative is to quit the field of literary criticism and the history of philosophy. But, as said earlier, one should not go farther than possible. What to do if every new alternative interpretation of an 'apparent' inconsistency appears to generate new logically implausibilities? In that case one might at least consider the option exemplarily expressed by Wilamowitz, *Platon* (Berlin 1919) II 238 n. 1:

> We should not regard the rhapsode as a consistent systematic thinker. Hence we should distrust the system that the [doxographic] treatises hand down to us, and which our historians of philosophy develop even further.[50]

This other extreme on the scale of exegetical principles might make us reconsider the word 'thinker' in Finkelberg's phrase just quoted. Does an author only deserve this predicate if he thinks in exactly the way modern thinkers think? What *all* suggestions discussed so far have in common—and share with the modern strategies discussed in our second chapter—is the imposition of a typical modern drive towards

---

[49] This is in the context of the interpretation of B 34, as quoted below p. 256, where Finkelberg refuses to believe that Xenophanes can have "declared that though human beings can never attain certain knowledge about distant things and that his accounts of heavenly and underground things were mere opinions, concerning the divine he possessed precise knowledge and therefore his account on God was the most certain truth." An implausibility that he introduces with the rhetorical question "Must we, then, allow that Xenophanes did not trouble to be consistent?" The difference between our positions is that what he here poses as an (ironic) rhetorical question is exactly a question that to my mind is both legitimate and in need of serious consideration.

[50] "Wir werden in dem Rhapsoden nicht einen konsequenten Systematiker sehen dürfen, also dem System, das die [sc. doxographischen] Referate uns überliefern, und unsere Historiker der Philosophie noch weiter ausbauen, mißtrauen." Even though the great Hellenist may have gone a bit far in his outspoken preference for the poet over the systematic philosopher, his observation that it was the doxographic tradition, especially Theophrastos and Ps. Aristoteles, *De Melisso, Xenophane, Gorgia* that constructed a system from the works of Xenophanes on the basis of Eleatic and Peripatetic models is indisputable. Whatever we accept as system in Xenophanes rests largely on later reconstruction: J. Wiesner, *Ps. Aristoteles MXG: Der historische Wert des Xenophanes-Referates* (Amsterdam 1974); Finkelberg 1990. Note that Aristotle *Met*. 986b27 calls him "somewhat uncouth" (*agroikoteros*), referring to the lack of well constructed arguments in his work.

consistency upon an archaic mentality that need not (always) have had a similar penchant for (our) logic. This does not mean that all these suggestions are mistaken. It is, to mention only one, true that traditional expressions may persevere in an otherwise revolutionary new context. A popular proverbial expression still in fashion a century ago in modern (allegedly *monotheistic*) Greece bears a curious resemblance to the Xenophanean paradox: "May God fit thee to find favour with gods and men" (νὰ σ' ἀξιώσῃ ὁ θεὸς νὰ εὐχαριστήσῃς θεοὺς καὶ ἀνθρώπους).[51]

Whichever position one may tend to favour, the polytheistic or the monotheistic, the first thing to do is to determine what we may agree that we know of Xenophanes' ideas with a reasonable degree of certainty. This means that for the moment we restrict ourselves to what may be taken as authentic remnants of his own writings. Of course, this is another bone of contention between the specialists, but the seven dogmas as formulated by Barnes (above p. 246) may come close to a common denominator. If we accept them, and I have nothing against it, we should realize that the qualities ascribed to 'God' under nos. 1, 3, 5 and 6 are directly derived from the fragments, while those under nos. 2, 4, and 7 are inferences drawn from the *dis*qualifications of the traditional gods of (Homeric) mythology. They are expressions of a *theologia negativa*. In a discussion in which the one (new) God is opposed to the many (old) gods, this *e contrario* ascription of positive qualifications to the one god seems legitimate. What, however, can on no account be justified is to adopt Barnes' list, but adapt it in such a way that the singular 'God' in nos. 2, 4 and 7 is now 'pluralized' with the result that '*Gods* are ungenerated,' '*Gods* are not anthropomorphic' and '*Gods* are morally perfect.'[52] Such an extrapolation is inadmissible. The poet singled out disreputable qualifications for the traditional gods of myth and bestowed the most magnificent qualities onto his One God. But he did *not* say that the traditional gods should be 'reformed' in accordance with the image of the new one. In what remains of his work he leaves us up in the air with respect to the section of his theology—if it ever existed, which I seriously doubt—that concerned

[51] J.C. Lawson, *Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion* (Cambridge 1910) 48, who aptly comments that it "combines impartially the one God and the many." Laura Gibbs tells me that instead of the expression "God and saints preserve us" she often hears people saying "gods and saints preserve us."

[52] So for instance Schäfer 1996, 203. This confusion also haunts A. Drozdek Xenophanes' Theology, *SIFC* Quarta serie, 2 (2004) 141–157. I did not see his *Greek Philosophers as Theologians. The Divine* Arche (Aldershot and Burlington VT 2007).

the many gods except for the explicit advice to worship and honour them in their cults. The author *may* have regarded them as "gereinigte Götter," as many scholars prefer, but, clearly, that is not the central issue of his interest. His theology is focused on the One; the arguments derived from the frailties of the mythical gods are put in the service of that goal and of that goal only. The question "and what about the other gods?" is ours, being a corollary of our bent toward consistent systematization. And we shrink from considering the possibility that at this point Xenophanes just discontinued his strictly logical train of thought by *not* explicating this part of his theology.

But is it possible to accept that Xenophanes tolerated a form of coexistence of the One and the many, without seriously attempting to accommodate the inherent inconsistency? I will try to answer this question in the next section of our enquiry. For the moment it must suffice that in a veiled manner the poet himself may have hinted at the implied paradoxes of his 'system,' namely in fragment (B 34):

> No man knows, or ever will know, the truth about the gods and about everything I speak of: for even if one chanced to say the complete truth, yet oneself does not know it; but opinion is allotted to all (men).[53]

How very intricate the "truth about the gods" is appears from a few lines from his famous Banquet elegy, where (ll.13 ff.) he gives the seemingly monotheistic advice:

> The first thing men of sense should do is to sing a hymn to *the God* with reverent words and pure speech, with a libation and a prayer for the means to do what is right.

However, only ten lines later, plurality strikes back in the final line (24), where we read:

> Nay, always keep *the gods* duly in mind.

2. One *and* Many

Despite the miracles of ingenuity displayed by scholars such as Potsherd, Stokes, Lesher and Gerson—to mention only the ones with whom I feel most affinity on this issue—to come to terms with the

[53] On the much debated meaning of this fragment, see: E. Heitsch, *Xenophanes. Die Fragmente* (Munich-Zürich 1983) 173–184; *idem*, Das Wissen des Xenophanes, *RhM*. 109 (1966) 193–235, espec. 208–216; *idem*, 1994; Finkelberg 1990, 131–146.

aporia that we are discussing, the fact remains that there is always a 'however'. Too many solutions, too many 'howevers'. Methodically the correct first step is just to accept the irrefutable observation of Lesher:

> the fragments warrant attributing to Xenophanes the novel idea of a single god of unusual power, consciousness, and cosmic influence, but not the stronger view that beyond this one god there could be nothing else worthy of the name.[54]

Next, however, we should ask the question: How must we imagine that Xenophanes coped with the paradox? *Did* he? Did he *experience* it as a paradox? We have seen that some scholars claim that Xenophanes must have been a monotheist (he said so himself, didn't he?), others that he cannot but have been a polytheist (he said so himself, right?). In order to solve the paradox one scholar makes an appeal to phenomena of linguistic-rhetorical perseverance, another devises a theology in which gods are part of *the* god.[55] Nobody, as far as I know, has ever contended in an explicit and straight enunciation that Xenophanes just adhered to *both* views (he said so himself, okay?), because he literally had no choice.[56] Before we explore this suggestion a bit further, I should first say what I do *not* wish to imply by this idea. I am not thinking of a conscious yielding to political or social pressure, whether or not compensated by an occasional 'eppure si muove' between the teeth.[57] Nor do I appeal to an unconscious slip (quite a few slips as a

---

[54] Lesher 1992, 99, thus summarizing a wide-spread opinion, as we have seen. It is not this fact but its interpretation on which opinions widely differ.

[55] "Diese verwirrende Fülle sich widersprechender Xenophanesbilder": P. Steinmetz, Xenophanes-studien, *RhM* 109 (1966) 13–73, espec. 24.

[56] Although Pötscher 1962 comes quite close. His discussion and refutation of all other interpretations mentioned in my text is the most cogent one known to me. Also parts of his interpretation of the relationship 'One god'- 'the gods', that I shall cite shortly, are convincing, but I do not follow him in his central thesis that 'the gods' are representatives of 'the One god': "Durch die Wesensgleichheit des einen Gottes und der Götter—wenn man von der Einheit des überragenden absieht—vermögen ihn diese zu repräsentieren;" "Der eine Gott ist in ihnen allen präsent, weil sie—die Erscheinungsformen von ihm in der bewussten Welt—ihm in allem gleich sind, aber er ist doch mehr als die Summe der Götter: denn er ist der Eine". Cf. also Gerson *l.c.* below n. 58. O. Gigon, Die Theologie der Vorsokratiker, in: Rose 1954, 127–155; *ibid.* 33–36, asks just the right questions on these types of contradictions ("Widerspruch") and argues that some of them are unresolvable and should be taken seriously ("unaufhebbar und anzuerkennen" [35]).

[57] This is the solution of S.E. Lawrence, The God that is Truly God and the Universe of Euripides' *Heracles, Mnemosyne* 51 (1998) 129–146, where he discusses a strikingly similar problem of consistency in *HF* 1340–1346. The hero's rejection of all kinds of negative features of 'the gods' (and with them of the existence of these gods themselves)

matter of fact) of pen or tongue, nor even—though there is nothing wrong with it—to a gradual development in the philosopher's thought of which we have only incoherent and undatable scraps of evidence. What I do wish to suggest can be explained in three related, but distinct arguments.

First, Xenophanes, besides being a genius, was and remained a child of his time and, like most other social beings, was unable to escape from his cultural universe, even if he had wished to. While experimenting with one he was living with a second, different set of images and representations of the divine. The two indeed diverged dramatically and, if subjected to a severe formal logical analysis, would inevitably have come to a clash. The significant point—infinitely more interesting and important than the irresolvable and indeed mistaken question, which of the two aspects represented his *real* conviction[58]—is that they were *not* scrutinized in such a relentless fashion.[59] Apparently, both concep-

---

and his preference for "The god, who if truly God, needs nothing" (sometimes viewed as an allusion to Xenophanes, D.-K. C 1. So, e.g. W.K.C. Guthrie, *The Sophists* [Cambridge 1971] 230; Barnes 1982, 90 ff.; cf. G.W. Bond, *Euripides, Heracles* [Oxford 1981] *ad loc*., but cf. more balanced: F. Egli, *Euripides im Kontext zeitgenössischer intellektueller Strömungen. Analyse der Funktion philosophischer Themen in den Tragödien und Fragmenten* [Munich—Leipzig 2003] 122–125) call into question the fundamental presuppositions of the plot. Renouncing the full range of soothing, denying and negotiating solutions by earlier scholars, Lawrence concludes: "Heracles new god is Euripides' way of giving his hero a purely secular orientation without turning him into an atheist." Chr. Sourvinou-Inwood 2003, 373, on the 'notion of divine self-sufficiency' here put forward by Heracles concludes: "The central notion of unknowability in Greek religion allowed speculation of this type to be unproblematically articulated."

[58] In this respect there are excellent observations in Gerson 1990, 18 f., who aptly notes that there may easily be some confusion in using the terms 'monotheistic' and 'polytheistic' as contradictory and as suitable for classifying the thought of Xenophanes: "If by 'polytheism' we mean the recognition of a multiplicity of active powers in the universe stronger and more durable than men, then Xenophanes is a polytheist. (….) If 'polytheism' indicates belief in a multiplicity of *personal* beings more powerful and durable than men, I think the textual evidence is against the claim that Xenophanes is a polytheist. (….) When I say that Xenophanes is a philosophical monotheist, I do not mean to deny that he is a polytheist in the first sense or that, conceivably, he is a polytheist in the second sense, but that he reasons to a unique *arche* in the universe …" The (essential) difference between Gerson's views and mine is that I would *not* deny that the two conceptions—monotheism-poytheism—*are* mutually exclusive if considered from one and the same perspective. Nor would I deny the possibility of the second option concerning polytheism, though avoiding the term 'belief". As I shall argue, in Xenophanes' perception they exist simultaneous and side by side as *complementary* but independent forms of expression.

[59] As we discussed in the previous chapter, it requires lots of courage in our often rigidly constructivistic late modern climate to reconsider whether there may still be a

tions could and did exist side by side not only within the cultural universe of one civilization or in one period of time, which is a historical banality, *but even in the mind of one poet and thinker*,[60] which may be of great explanatory relevance. In other words, in the field of natural philosophy Xenophanes devised a radically new conception of god, yet did not even contemplate taking an equally radical leave from the cultic—and, one might even assume partly also from the mythical[61]—conception of the (traditional) gods, who had always been and continued to be indispensable and essential materials for the construction of the (religious) symbolic universe of the *polis*. Whenever—*if* ever—it was necessary to keep them apart, the author had recourse to several different layers of discourse—philosophical, mythical, cultic—, which constantly alternate and intertwine in his texts.

In general, the two different imageries may be prevented from clashing by a virtuoso winking process, well-known from (socio-) psychological reactions to cognitive dissonance.[62] In a fascinating monograph on Erasmus, another genius on the borderline between two paradigms,

---

spark of truth in the discovery of the last part of this century, for instance in the works of Hermann Fränkel, Bruno Snell, and in a different way in Walter Pötscher, that archaic Greeks did not (always) draw similar nor equally harsh distinctions as 20th century readers. If *we* want to make sense of Greek religion, following the lines set out by Gould 1985, we should *not* overlook the motto that he adopted from William Empson: "The notion is that life involves maintaining oneself between contradictions that cannot be solved." And cf. the words of J.F. Holleman as quoted in Ch. II n. 53.

[60] Indeed, it would do no harm to recall that Xenophanes is "the only one whose genuine writings find a place both among the Presocratic philosophers of Diels and the lyric anthology of Diehl": Guthrie 1962, 361. On the grounds for his preference for the metrical form see: G. Most, in: Long 1999, 351 ff.

[61] In this respect I agree with Eisenstadt 1974 and Babut 1974, the latter of whom, however, goes too far in downplaying the uniqueness and singularity of the new God.

[62] I have amply discussed these psychological techniques introduced by L. Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (New York 1957) in the Introduction to *TER UNUS,* 4–8, where more relevant titles can be found, and applied them throughout that book. I also addressed the question whether the notion of cognitive dissonance may be applied as long as the conflicting elements are not brought to the attention of the observer. It may, in terms of "a winking process" applied to keep two conflicting realities apart exactly in order to *prevent* them from clashing on the level of conscious awareness. Then the dissonances are "situated just below the normal level of critical consciousness in men [.....] so that they could in principle have been aware of it but as a rule took it for granted," thus J.G.A. Pocock, *Politics, Language, and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (New York 1971) 32. Another question is whether the theory may be applied at all to pre-modern—even ancient—mentality. This question was answered affirmatively and convincingly by N.H. Taylor, Cognitive Dissonance and Early Christianity: A Theory and its Application Reconsidered, *Religion and Theology. A Journal of Contemporary Religious Discourse* 5 (1998) 138–153.

the stark inconsistencies and ambiguities in his thought and expression are explained by the fact that he belonged to two cultures: the late medieval world which he could not forsake, and the early modern one which he helped to create.[63] And so did Xenophanes.[64]

In his thought-provoking excursus on the 'logische Frage' implied in the contradictions of the One and the Many in Egyptian religion, Hornung,[65] after denouncing a long list of traditional explanations marked by such predicates as 'alogic', 'prelogic', or 'undifferentiated', embraces the concept of complementarity. Two logically contradictory predicates or qualities can both be experienced as true and valid. He adduces Bohr's theory of the complementary validity of both the wave- and the quantum theory as a revealing analogy. Incidentally, the present paragraph, more than any other in this book, may offer some relief to those who fear that living by inconsistencies, contradictions and ambiguities, is a symptom of (primitive) stupidity and hence may disqualify 'their' Greeks. It is not and it does not.

My second argument is that Xenophanes did not need to *keep* apart his two types of gods. They *were* apart. The new god represents a radi-

---

[63] J.D. Tracy, *Erasmus of the Low Countries* (Berkeley 1997). Circa 1600 AD revolutionary astronomical discoveries were gradually incorporated into a traditional cosmology, effecting incredible contradictions: T. van Nouhuys, *The Age of Two-Faced Janus. The Comets of 1577 and 1618 and the Decline of the Aristotelian World View in the Netherlands* (Diss. Leiden 1997). For antiquity I have argued the same concerning the paradox of liberation and subjection in the early Hellenistic period as a signal of cultural and political transition: "There are indispensable relics of the old which still exists and inevitable signs of the new which already exists, irreconciled and pregnant with tension:" *TER UNUS*, 39–95, espec. 82 f. For the clash between monotheism and polytheism in Israel compare for instance: N. Lohfink, Polytheistisches und monotheistisches Sprechen über Gott im Alten Testament, in: *idem, Unsere grossen Wörter. Das Alte Testament zu Themen dieser Jahren* (Freiburg etc. 1977) 124–144, espec. 139: "Es herscht also eine Dialektik von Vielheit und Einheit"; 141: "Es kam darauf an, Polytheismus wie Monotheismus (.....) als zwei in gewisser Hinsicht gleichwertige, jedoch epochal festgelegte Weisen des Sprechens über Gott deutlich werden zu lassen."

[64] No less a person than Karl Popper has often lauded Xenophanes as a forerunner of his own, very (late) modern, philosophy, and thus becomes easy prey for Feyerabend's scorn (see below. p. 265).

[65] Hornung 1971, 233–240. For what follows he refers to C.F. von Weizsäcker, Komplementarität und Logik, *Die Naturwissenschaften* 42 (1955) 521–529; A. Petersen, *Quantumphysics and the Philosophical Tradition* (Cambridge Mass. 1968). I do hope this is not going too far into amateurish exploitation of half (or less)-understood physics as mercilessly denounced by A. Sokal & J. Bricmont, *Eleganter Unsinn. Wie die Denker der Postmoderne die Wissenschaften mißbrauchen* (Munich 1999), after the first of these two authors had managed to make a monkey out of the editorial board of the journal *Social Text*, by publishing, in its 1996 volume, a nonsense article under the title "Transgressing the Boundaries. A Transformatic Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity."

cally new and different category. Though conceived of as the *immanent* principle of all that is, he or it at the same time *transcends* all that is: gods and men.[66] In later times a human being who exceeded all other mortals in power or quality—such as Hellenistic kings or Roman emperors—could be promoted into a category different from the human species. Transcending the *condition humaine* he became god. As long as he was god—for instance during restricted periods in which his divinity was ritually staged or politically deployed—the display of human frailties was frowned upon: no spitting or sneezing for the deified emperor during his *adventus*. However, though parading as a god and being honoured with the same "hymns, reverent words and libation," to quote Xenophanes, and even with sacrifices, he was not a god like the other 'real' gods.[67] The few megalomaniacs who did fail to observe the boundaries were considered insane. All this (and much more) indicates that there was no such thing as one fixed category 'god'.[68] Rather we are confronted with a type of classification without sharp borders, more especially with a so-called 'polythetic class', a concept first coined by Wittgenstein. Such classes are like families to which all members belong, linked by "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing" without, however, sharing all the family resemblances.[69]

A process of deification distantly comparable with that of the Hellenistic ruler happened to Xenophanes' First Principle of Being,

---

[66] Gerson 1990, 242 n. 18, is right when he calls it misleading in a Pre-Socratic context to use the contrast between immanence and transcendence to describe the early understanding of an *arche*. I cannot go into this aspect of the Xenophanean god here for which, besides the literature on Xenophanes mentioned in earlier notes, see especially: J.A. Palmer, Xenophanes' Ouranian God in the fourth Century, in: *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 16 (1998) 1–34.

[67] Significantly, as a rule people did not pray to the divine ruler, although, as always, there are a few exceptions. All this will be the subject of our last chapter.

[68] See below Chapter VI.

[69] L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (New York 1958, translated from the German ed. of 1953) I, 66 f. The principle of polythetic classification is exemplarily exploited by J.Z. Smith, Fences and Neighbors: Some Contours of Early Judaism, in: *idem*, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago 1982) 1–18. It is also usefully applied to the definition of 'religion': W.P. Alston, Religion, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* VII (1967) 142, distinguishes 'nine religion-making characteristics' and states that "when enough of these characteristics are present to a sufficient degree, we have religion". The same might work out for gods, but, of course, Alston's statements together contain at least three subjective elements liable to arbitrariness. See on all this: R. Needham, Polythetic Classification: Convergence and Consequences, *Man* 10 (1975) 349–369.

departing however from the other extreme on the scale of divinity. Exceeding all imagination, the First Principle inevitably was endowed with the highest and uniquely unsurpassable predicate available in the Greek language. 'It' became god *faute de mieux*.[70] However, though bearing the same name and sharing a number of qualities with the traditional gods, 'he' differs from them in other respects. Nothing gives better expression to the profound difference than the concept 'transcendence'. Though belonging to the same polythetic class as (traditional) gods, the One God at the same time transcends all others, hence belongs to a different category. His ontological (and grammatical) 'singularity' entails a qualitative singularity.[71] This implies that the One and the Many did not need to *compete*. As concepts they were complementary. Both possessed a conceptual domain of their own besides sharing the territory common to gods. There was no real urge, either in the domain of society or in that of logic, to expel either one of them from the religious perception.[72]

It may be helpful here to call to mind that language can be desperately slippery. As we shall discover in subsequent chapters, a god need not *always* be god, some gods are *not complete* gods, other gods are *supercomplete* gods, hence some gods are *more* god than others,[73] etcetera. In other words the term *theos,* that we translate as "god" (but especially here translating is a precarious if not impossible venture) accommodates a scale of gradually shifting meanings, the extremes being hardly recognizable as belonging to one class. Generally, the

---

[70] As Gerson 1990, 246 n. 40, scornfully remarks about one modern interpretation of the *apeiron* of Anaximander. Cf. Burkert 1996a, 27 "Language itself, as a signifying system, seems to be in need of an 'ultimate signifier', the absolute, god".

[71] This would be my answer to a question raised by F. Chapouthier in: Rose 1954, 162: "Comment les philosophes ont-ils laisser subsister côte à côte d'une part le nom de dieu pour désigner les principes de la nature et quelquefois un principe unique et de l'autre ce même nom pour désigner les dieux de la religion traditionnelle?" (And see the subsequent discussion there). Pötscher 1962, 5, seems to be the only one who has understood this: "um die Götter hat man sich zu kümmern wie um eine reale Gegebenheit (….) Doch der eine Gott hat eine höhere Realität indem er der grösste ist, sich aber nicht bloss graduell von den Göttern unterscheidet, sondern durch seine Singularität (*heis theos*) in einem prinzipiellen Gegensatz zu der pluralistischen Gattung der *theoi* steht." However, my final interpretation of their interrelationship differs fundamentally from his, as cited above n. 56.

[72] Comparably on the basic differences between the literary genres of epic and dramatic poetry on the one hand and philosophy and science on the other, and their implications for the representations of the divine: Nicolai 2005.

[73] As, in a different context, Chaniotis 2010, 121 entitles one of his sections: 'Some gods are more divine than others'.

(modern) reader's attitude seems to be determined by two equally irrational assumptions, namely 1) that the human mind is capable of and prepared to constantly produce consistent thought-sequences; and 2) that language is the perfect means of communication for expressing these thoughts adequately and unambiguously to others.[74] As for the latter assumption, even the briefest glance at the linguistic literature[75] teaches us that human language is an extremely precarious means of communication. Any introduction to polysemy will teach that one term can unite quite incompatible, sometimes even radically opposite implications, references and meanings, depending on the user, the situation and the associations they bear. "Hence comes the great trouble we have in understanding each other (….): it is because we all use the same words without giving them the same meaning," Durkheim sighed already in 1912.[76] An additional complication is that it is not so much the question of what person or what thing, but in what context or discourse a person or thing may be called god. It is the context or discourse which decides what is or is not tolerated. All this may help us not too readily to dismiss a polysemantic potential in the term "theos," and will thus be of service in the present context as well as in later chapters, most of all in the last one.

I add briefly a third consideration, which is both a specification and a generalization of the argument just put forward and is independent of the specific nature of the one god of Xenophanes. There is no need for a detailed discussion, because we have dealt with the subject in our first chapter. There we saw that the imagery and, indeed, the 'personality' of a god in a cultic ambiance, be it in private worship or in temple ritual, is not necessarily identical to, in fact is often very different from, the same god (or rather the god with the same name) in theological reflection or mythical narrative. Moreover, it is perfectly possible, and

---

[74] See: *TER UNUS* 14 ff., for a more detailed discussion and bibliographical references.

[75] J.G. Kooij, *Ambiguity in Natural Language* (Amsterdam-London 1971), espec. Ch. 5: Ambiguity in the Lexikon: some Observations on Polysemy; J. Lyons, *Semantics* I, II (Cambridge 1977); G. Leech, *Semantics* (Harmondsworth 1977); B.Th. Tervoort *et alii, Psycholinguistiek* (Utrecht 1975=1972); R.F. Terwilliger, *Meaning and Mind* (Oxford 1968).

[76] E. Durkheim, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (Paris 1912). I quote from the English translation: *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (London 1976[2]) 436. Here is how a linguist phrases the problem: "Words (….) do not have 'meanings' in the sort of way that children have parents. They have *uses*, identifiable in particular places and periods" (Carney 1972, 86).

even belongs to normal practice, to perform a cultic ritual without ever relating it to the specific theological identity of the god involved. Dutch ministers daintily succeed in ritually reciting the apostolic creed which portrays a god whom, to judge by their sermons, the same preachers have long lost sight of. For this same reason the many gods of civil religion did not need to collide with the One created by Xenophanes, probably not even in the philosopher's own perception.[77]

And different they were! The profound innovation in the concept of the Xenophanean god becomes apparent precisely in the phrases quoted from the Banquet elegy:

> The first thing men of sense should do is to sing a hymn to the God with reverent words and pure speech, with a libation and a prayer for the means to do what is right.

Insofar as the new god should be honoured with hymns, reverent words, pure speech, and with libations, there is not much of a problem. Rough outlines of what these hymns may have looked like can be gathered from hymns referring to a 'one and all' ideology ubiquitous in later times. Libations, as distinct from sacrifice (which is conspicuously lacking in the picture), are appropriate too. They often function not so much as a gift to the god(s) but rather as the ritual overture to the communication with the divine.[78] However, as soon as prayer comes into view difficulties emerge. What should one pray for to a god of such an immense and abstract nature? The answer is as appropriate in the philosophical context as it is unserviceable in the religion of daily life. One should ask for "the means to do what is right." With this prescription a long history of 'philosophical prayer' begins.[79] If it is

---

[77] Cf. S. Broadie, in: Long 1999, 210: "A precise monotheism is not among Xenophanes' innovations (….). As his language shows, the issue for him is not the numerical unicity of the divine, but its self-harmony." All this implies that I cannot accept the proposition (which came to my attention after the the completion of the present chapter) of J. Halfwassen, Der Gott des Xenophanes: Überlegungen über Ursprung und Struktur eines philosophischen Monotheismus, *ARG* 10 (2008) 275–294. To my mind his view that Xenophanes denied the *existence* of the 'normal' gods is just as untenable as his absolutist thesis that Xenophanes "Gott und Welt ontologisch von einander geschieden hat."

[78] P. Veyne, Images de divinités tenant une phiale ou patère: La libation comme "rite de passage" et non pas offrande, *Metis* 5 (1990) 17–28. As such it may be ranged among what M.F.C. Bourdillon & M. Fortes (edd.), *Sacrifice* (Bristol 1980) call 'token gifts', 'gifts' whose value consists in a gesture of piety and good will. Cf. below (Ch. IV, n. 107).

[79] Chr. Eucken *o.c.* (above n. 40); Pulleyn 1997, 209–214.

true, in the words of Burkert,[80] that Xenophanes found listeners but no adherents or disciples, and that his theories had no impact whatever on the mainstream cult religion, this can be explained above all by the fact that his god by its very nature was devoid of anything resembling anthropomorphic personality in terms of either representation (image, myth) or communication (cultic ritual, prayer). These four elements, it should be recalled, were the stuff ancient religion was made of. The god of Xenophanes, conversely, was 'ab-human'[81] according to the Sceptic Timon, and "ein Denk-, Seh-, Hör-, und Intelligenz*monstrum*" in the opinion of Paul Feyerabend,[82] referring to the famous characterization in B 24: "As whole he/it sees, as whole he/it comprehends, as whole he/it hears."[83]

Once more, ambiguity cannot be avoided. According to Jaeger, on the strength of exactly the same data, the One God is quite clearly a conscious, more or less personal being,[84] while, on the other hand, Cornford[85]—followed by many others—holds that, if 'personal' at all, the god is yet not a person in the full sense of that term, since in contrast to the traditional gods, there is no communication with him. Indeed, according to some specialists, Xenophanes' theology is better characterized by the concept pantheism[86] than by monotheism. Again I would suggest that it is mistaken, and consequently doomed to failure, to try and explain Xenophanes' system in terms of an 'either-or' dilemma. Rather, and this time even more obviously, we are confronted with an exemplary instance of an 'and-and' complementarity. In its

---

[80] Burkert 1985, 309.

[81] Thus my tentative translation of (funny) Greek *ap'anthrôpôn* (Fabricius; mss *apanthrôpon*)—by analogy with 'abnormal', and in order to avoid the misleading term 'inhuman'—as Timon (*apud* Sext. Emp. *Hypoth*. 1.224 = Fr. A 35 D–K.) qualifies the Xenophanean god. On this passage: E. Vogt, Des Timon von Phleius Urteil über Xenophanes, *RhM* 107 (1964) 295–298.

[82] Feyerabend 1986, 210. For the unapproachability of such a god see below nn. 113 f.

[83] Except in cases of emphasis Greek does not use pronouns to indicate the subject (no doubt to the relief of Xenophanes). Different translations betray (slightly) different interpretations. KRS: "All of him sees, all thinks, and all hears"; Lesher: "Whole he sees, whole he thinks, and whole he hears."

[84] Jaeger 1947, 44; cf. François 1957, 162: "un être personnel."

[85] F. M. Cornford, *Principium sapientiae. The Origins of Greek Philosophical Thought* (Cambridge 1952) 147 f.

[86] On pantheistic concepts of the one god see: Rowe 1980. For bibliography see: C. Corbato, Studi senofanei, *Annali Triestini* 22 (1952) 179–227, espec. 180 n. 6–9; M. Untersteiner, *Senofane* (Florence 1955) pp. cc ff.

(original) quality of a physical *arche*, the First Principle is a neuter and as such 'it' can—albeit not very easily—be designated without the aid of anthropomorphic characteristics. As a *theos* (the second step in the evolution) 'he' cannot.[87] Consequently, in the course of his reflection on the *arche*, the philosopher is both condemned to and saved by a constantly alternating appeal to two different focuses, the physical-philosophical and the theological, each marked by its corresponding type of discourse. However, the two layers of perception do intermingle as they have never stopped doing in theological reflection till the present day. Due to restrictions inherent in human imagination and language it is impossible to speak about a god, however devoid of human characteristics, without applying anthropomorphic terminology.[88] Any philosopher of religion knows it: why demand from Xenophanes more than the humanly possible?

3. *Concluding remarks*

One and Many, unity and diversity, it is all there in Xenophanes' philosophy. However, the interaction between the two does not allow a rash and simple definition. If there is unity in diversity here, it is not the well-known concept of a plurality of gods united into, or being parts or emanations of, one all-encompassing supreme divine being. The *arche* devised by Xenophanes was the product of natural philosophy, not of theology. As *physical* 'all' it did encompass, but it encompassed everything that is, because it *was* everything that is: not only gods, but also men, and the whole material world. Just as men were both part of it *and* were independent beings, so were the (traditional) gods. As *theological* 'One God' (*Heis Theos*) he transcended everything, hence also the (other) gods, and in this perspective the gods maintained their traditional (pluralist) independent status. Instead of inclusiveness there is coexistence in accordance with the principle of complementarity. In the words of M.L. West:[89] "People are slow to adjust their religion to their philosophy."

---

[87] Cf. O. Gigon in: Rose 1954, 138, in connection with the *apeiron* of Anaximander: "Die gewaltsame Verknüpfung dinglicher und personaler Kategorien (……). Es genügt zu sehen, wie seltsam (…..) ‚physikalische' und ‚theologische' Kategorien sich verbinden;" 135: "Der Widerspruch ist unaufhebbar und anzuerkennen."

[88] This is the point of departure of our Chapter V.

[89] In: Athanassiadi & Frede 1999, 40, where he also states: "Yet it is difficult to find a Presocratic who can be counted as a monotheist without qualification."

In general terms, then, it would appear that a monotheistic theology is *not* 'by definition' rigorously incompatible with polytheistic forms of (cult-)religion. Though I have argued that Xenophanes' monotheism was not *inclusive*, I would not object to the label *non-exclusivistic*.[90] In the first part of this chapter we learned that the so-called monotheism of the Old Testament was not an *exclusive* belief in One God during the major part of its development. The collective volume about monotheistic tendencies in late antiquity by Athanassiadi & Frede 1999 in the words of one reviewer, T.D. Barnes,[91] "proves that even if they worshipped a multiplicity of gods, most thinking men in late antiquity who reflected at all on what this worship meant were in a very real sense monotheists."

Recently Nicolai 2005 raised the question whether personal and a-personal representations of the divine are compatible or not. For archaic and classical Greece he concludes:

> Obviously, in daily praxis the more educated Greeks liberally ignored the logical incompatibility of the traditional (strongly poetically ingrained) religion and the pilosophically enlightened religion. Without scruples they followed a double track course.[92]

"Doppelgleisig verfahren" (a double track procedure), that is the perfect expression of what I have argued for Xenophanes and in which this poet-philosopher is far from being an exception. As to the nature of the (other) gods I have argued against the suggestion that they formed a novel category different from the traditional (Homeric) gods. However, there is yet another possibility: *hoi theoi* of Xenophanes might be congruent with a traditional picture, though not with that of the traditional Olympian family as represented in myth and cult, but as a comprehensive expression indicating a more or less generic

---

[90] I would be tempted to suggest for further use the term 'sophisticated polytheism', if its creator had not meant something radically different by it: W.G. Lambert, The Historical Development of the Mesopotamian Pantheon: A Study in Sophisticated Polytheism, in: H. Goedicke & J.J.M. Roberts (edd.), *Unity and Diversity: Essays in the History, Literature, and Religion of the Ancient Near East* (Baltimore-London 1975) 191–199.

[91] Monotheists all?, *Phoenix* 55 (142–162), espec. 143.

[92] "In der Praxis des täglichen Lebens hat man (in der Welt der gebildeten) zwar offensichtlich über die logische Unvereinbarkeit der traditionellen (stark poetisch geprägten) Religion und der philosophisch aufgeklärten Religion großzügig hinweggesehen und ist guten Gewissens doppelgleisig verfahren."

anonymous divine leading principle in nature.[93] Although it will soon become apparent that this possibility is not consonant with the religious evidence, the question is of interest to our issue, for indeed, in archaic and classical literature, the expression *hoi theoi* often refers to a general organizing principle ruling nature and cosmos. In the following section I will explore this second experiment in oneness.

3. One is Many: The Gods, the God and the Divine

In addition to such proclamations that god is one and all, there exists a type of discourse in which the term god (and variants) seems to be used as a general device to explain—or at least to convey (some) sense to—the inexplicable, often connoting such notions as inescapable fate, chance or the predestined. The terms *ho theos, hoi theoi, to theion, ho daimon, hoi daimones*, referring to an anonymous and mysteriously interfering divine (or at least supernatural) power, abound in Greek idiom of all periods. A full discussion of the material can be found in a comprehensive study by François 1957, where all the testimonies are duly collected. We encountered the phenomenon in the passages of Herodotus discussed in the preceding chapter and we now return for a moment to this author. For this I have several reasons. First and foremost these episodes reveal in an exemplary fashion the frequency of the term and the important part played by the terms and concepts of 'gods', 'the god' or 'the divine'. Secondly, these passages are easily the most appropriate guides in finding the niche or the 'semantic family' of these terms in a context of connotative alternatives. Thirdly, Herodotus is particularly interesting in this respect since he adopts and further develops previous archaic thought patterns on the one hand, while foreshadowing an ensuing development on the other. So let us continue our enquiry following his lead.

1. *On singular plurals*

It has often been observed and valued as a conspicuous characteristic of Herodotus that in his work names of individual gods are relatively

[93] See for instance: François 1957, 169 ff., whose general argument I endorse, but whom I do not follow in his suggestion concerning Xenophanes' theology: "Le terme *theoi* n'exprime pas autre chose que la notion traditionelle de la Puissance divine," with reference to similar expressions in Pindar and Aeschylus.

rare, at least as far as their personal interventions in human affairs are concerned.[94] Instead, especially when he voices his own conviction concerning the causes of events—either as a narrator's comment or through the words of commentators in his text—Herodotus rather refers to gods, the gods, or the divine.[95] This does not mean that individual gods do not occur in action. They do, but not frequently and with little detail. For instance in stories of how they defend their sanctuaries against enemy attack (Demeter: 9.65; Poseidon: 8.129; in more general terms 8.109).[96] But even here ambiguities soon emerge, complicating the picture. Apollo in particular is a striking example of brinkmanship. At times he is the icon of anonymous divine foreknowledge or predestination, an oracular voice rather than a personal god. At other occasions, however, he distinctly is an individual deity with a will and affections, and in this identity he is subject to the absolute superior authority of fate and the predestined, that is to say: to 'the gods'. It is precisely the amalgamation of these two 'personalities' in the Croesus-episode that is so illustrative of the multiplicity of representations intertwining or interchanging in a dazzling shift of alternations.[97]

In the appendix of the present book it is shown that concepts of 'All the gods' and 'The Twelve Gods', though intended and generally understood as the sum total of the whole pantheon or of the twelve

---

[94] This is hardly to be explained as an overriding 'historiographical principle' as D. Lateiner, *The Historical Method of Herodotus* (Toronto etc. 1989) 64–67 argues, but rather an example of the 'uncertainty principle' as Gould 1985, 9–14 (and elsewhere, see below) argues. Cf. Harrison 1997, 104, and on the use of 'vague designations' *idem* 2000, 169 f. See also next note.

[95] Long ago I learned most of what was worth knowing concerning Herodotus' religious conceptions from a work in my own language: G.C.J. Daniëls, *Religieus-historische studie over Herodotus* (Antwerpen 1946). On the issue at stake see espec. Linforth 1928. Following this innovative article there has been a deluge of studies on this issue, most of which were already of great use in Ch. II: Nilsson *GGR* I, 759 ff.; Pötscher 1958; L. Huber, *Religiöse und politische Beweggründe des Handelns in der Geschichtsschreibung Herodots* (Tübingen 1965); Gould 1989, espec. Ch. 4 ‚Why things happen'. More recent and most excellent: Gould 1994 and Harrison 1997; *idem* 2000, Ch. 6, "The Unity and Multiplicity of the Divine', espec. 164–169 (*daimon*), 169–171 (the gods); 171–175 (the god); 176–179 (the divine—τὸ θεῖον).

[96] Linforth 1928, 211 ff. gives a complete list of (eleven) instances of direct intercourse between named gods and men. For events ascribed to named gods, see: *ibid.* 213–217; Harrison 1997, 104 f.; *idem* 2000, index s.v. 'divine intervention.'

[97] See on the general status of Apollo's oracles and the variety of reactions and interpretations: R.C.T. Parker, Greek States and Greek Oracles, in: P.A. Cartledge & F.D. Harvey (edd.), *Crux: Essays presented to G.E.M. de Ste. Croix* (= *History of Political Thought* 6 [1985]) 298–326.

great gods, in the cultic evidence functioned as a supplement added to, and not as a sum total replacing the individual gods. In cultic contexts (oath, vow, sacrifice, prayer) the collectives 'twelve gods' and 'all the gods' have acquired an identity in their own right, side by side with that of the individual gods. Besides illuminating questions of ordering, it can also help us clarify questions connected with our present subject.

If the Greeks can refer to 'all the gods' *and* Zeus *and* Apollo, this at least implies that the two constituents in this formula are of the same order, belong to the same class or system: both collectives and individuals boast a cultic existence and receive the concomitant forms of worship. This appears to be quite different in the case of *hoi theoi* (the gods). It can be shown that *hoi theoi* as an anonymous notion in the passages of Herodotus and elsewhere in Greek literature radically differs from *hoi theoi* in the sense of πάντες θεοί. More often than not the term 'the gods' is *not* intended to denote the sum total of individual gods,[98] which may receive worship as πάντες θεοί in local cults.[99] Rather than a cumulative or collective notion 'the gods' represent a conceptualizing comprehensive one, in which the notion of formal-grammatical plurality has practically disappeared from the semantic field of vision.[100] This is most obviously apparent from the fact that *hoi theoi* may occur as an equivalent of *ho theos*.[101] In contexts

---

[98] Already in the beginning of the last century W.H.S. Jones, A Note on the Vague Use of *THEOI, CR* 27 (1913) 252ff., referred to this as a "vague use."

[99] This goes beyond such formulations as: "Herodotus recognized the existence of numerous gods who may act as individuals on particular occasions, or who may be thought of as something like a unified group with a racial solidarity contrasting them with the race of men," as Linforth 1928, 218, has it, though I do accept many of his keen observations, e.g. on *theoi*: "There is actually no more mythological connotation in the word than there is in the word 'God' as used by a monotheist" (219). Mikalson 1983, 67 f. with numerous testimonies and literature in n. 18, speaks of an "abstractive collective" and states that such a persistent conception is "one of the features which (…) tends to distinguish it from its literary counterpart." Interestingly, Herodotus 2.52, says that "in ancient times (…) the Pelasgians offered and prayed to the gods, but without any distinction of name or title—for they had not yet heard of such a thing (….). Long afterwards the names of the gods were brought into Greece from Egypt and the Pelasgians learned them." See: W. Burkert, Herodot über die Namen der Götter: Polytheismus als historisches Problem, *MH* 42 (1985) 121–132.

[100] Cf. J. Assmann, Monotheism and Polytheism, in: Johnston 2004, 16: "Unity in this case does not mean the exclusive worship of one God, but the structure and coherence of the divine world, *which is not just an accumulation of deities*, but a structured whole, a pantheon."

[101] François 1957, 305, collects 83 texts throughout Greek literature in which the author uses *theos/daimon* alternatively in singular and plural, without any difference in meaning.

referring to fate, the predestined, chance or fortune, these two notions are fully interchangeable[102] as we can see for instance from the fact that the singular noun *ho theos* may take a verbal form in the plural.[103]

Likewise, *ho theos* or *to theion*,[104] in the generic sense of the divine authority ruling the universe and interfering in human life often synonymous with fate and predestination, stands in opposition to one individual god out of many.[105] The latter meaning of course occurs as well.[106] In some of the expressions of the Croesus *logos ho theos* unequivocally refers to one individual god, namely Apollo, who is with equal certainty *not* to be identified with fate and chance since according to his own confession by his attempt to help Croesus he has opposed himself to this highest anonymous authority, to which gods of his own category (that is *not* 'the gods' in the sense of an anonymous steering principle) are subjected, having only a restricted scope for intervention. And, of course, the term *theos* referring to a special god is ubiquitous in contexts where the identity of this god is

[102] M.L. West, in: Athanassiadi & Frede 1999, 38: "Whenever some theological truth is formulated, some statement about the régime under which mankind lives, the writer typically does not name one of the traditional gods but says οἱ θεοί or ὁ θεός. The indifference as between singular and plural is possible because when someone says 'the gods', the assumption is that these gods act as a unanimous body."

[103] François 1957, 106, which reinforces the conclusion that "*(ho) theos* et *(ho) daimon* ont été généralement employés, au singulier, dans un sens collectif" (307). Else 1949 mentions numerous cases of the collocation of monotheistic and polytheistic language in early Greek literature.

[104] Though I agree with the distinction by Pötscher 1958, 28 f., between *theos* as the generic concept of a god interfering in human life, as opposed to the mythical gods, I cannot accept his suggestion that *to theion* is a higher abstraction encompassing these two categories. The testimonia leave no doubt that *ho theos* and *to theion* belong roughly in the same semantic register, even though there are functional differences for which see: Harrison 2000, 176 ff., especially on the deductive and 'diagnostic' nature of the use of *to theion*.

[105] Pötscher 1958 is most instructive on the differentiation between 'the god' as a general concept and the gods of myth and cult. P. 7: "Beide Weisen, das Übernatürliche zu erfassen, als "den Gott" oder als einen aus dem reichen Götterhimmel der Griechen bestehen nebeneinander." At p. 8, he speaks of "einer gewissen Schichtenaufbau," one layer for the experience *theos*, the other for the mythical gods. Cf. Harrison 2000, 171–175, on the double denotation of *ho theos* as 'the god in question' on the one hand and the 'anonymous' generic use of the term on the other, including the quick alternation of the two in several passages.

[106] Linforth 1928, goes as far as possible—certainly too far—in tracing either an unnamed, but nonetheless well-known individual god or "the god who is directing this affair" wherever the term *ho theos* is used. The weaknesses of this approach are exemplarily exposed by Pötscher 1958.

made explicit.[107] So, paradoxically, both *ho theos* and *hoi theoi* may be indicative of both a polytheistic and a mon(othe)istic thought pattern. On the one hand, *hoi theoi* may be used as a plural of individual gods as e.g. in expressions such as: "one of the gods" or "none of the gods."[108] In the monistic sense of 'the divine authority ruling the universe', on the other hand, the expression *hoi theoi*, though grammatically the plural of *ho theos,* from a semantic point of view is not.[109] Indeed, as quoted earlier, "Words (….) do not have 'meanings' in the sort of way that children have parents. They have *uses*, identifiable in particular places and periods."

Accordingly, the two different notions covered by the same plural *hoi theoi*, though prone to confusion, as a rule can be well distinguished if viewed in their respective contexts. For it is the context which makes it possible for the language user to filter out from the various possible meanings of polyvalent words or expressions all except the desired ones.[110] Xenophanes profited from this opportunity offered by language. And as we shall experience to our sorrow in the third section of this chapter, there is some truth in the provocative contention by Quentin Skinner that: "if a statement is considered in a fully open context (…), a man might mean by it anything that a man might mean by it."[111]

One of the most telling differences between the two types of *hoi theoi* is that 'the gods' in the generic sense are by their very nature anonymous, while 'the gods' as *pantes theoi* are conceived as a collective of known and named gods. Now, probably the major function of name giving is social integration—the incorporation of the named person into one's own cultural sphere. Reversely, anonymity may either indicate that the anonymous one does not belong to one's own group or, on the other hand, is of an unbridgeably higher status, which makes him into a qualitative 'other'. Burckhardt Gladigow holds that absolute

---

[107] François 1957, 315–326 gives all the relevant places from the Greek literature treated in his book.

[108] Harrison 2000, 170.

[109] Although I agree with François 1957, 308, speaking on the term *hoi theoi* in Homer: "on laisse complètement dans l'ombre les traits individuels des divers dieux pour envisager avant tout l'unité de l'ensemble," I would in general go one step further and for later authors like Herodotus argue that *hoi theoi* is not even *experienced* as a 'collective' notion. See also below p. 273 f.

[110] Cf. Carney 1972, 105 ff.

[111] See: J. Dunn, The Identity of the History of Ideas, *Philosophy* 43 (1968) 85–104, espec. 98. See for further discussion: *TER UNUS* 16 ff.

anonymity is an expression of *Nichtverfügbarkeit*, unavailability.[112] The anonymous *hoi theoi,* like Fate*,* are unavailable for communication or negotiation. They are unapproachable. Moschos fr. 2 (mid 2nd c. BC) addresses Fate as λιταῖς ἄτεγκτε "not to be softened by prayers," and Vettius Valens 5.9.2 (2nd c. AD) says: "It is impossible to gain the victory over the predestined fate, either by prayer or by sacrifice." These expressions are *topoi*,[113] and as such can be found in much earlier literary expressions.

Here, I would suggest, we have arrived at the fundamental difference between the god(s) as a comprehensive anonymous (and monistic) notion and the gods as the sum total of individual, named divinities. A reference to the first category may provide a cause for disaster but is not helpful as to the desire for solution, help or recovery. Being an unapproachable supernatural principle 'the god(s)' cannot be mollified and there is no point in prayer or sacrifice.[114] There are altars and sacrifices for *pantes theoi*; there are none for *hoi theoi.*[115] If you want to get rid

---

[112] Gladigow 1975, 30 f.; 1981, 1217 f. As he also discusses, this is not the only function of anonymity. See e.g. A. Henrichs, Namenlosigkeit und Euphemismus: zur Ambivalenz der chthonischen Mächte im altattischen Drama, in: H. Hofmann (ed.), *Fragmenta dramatica: Beiträge zur Interpretation der griechischen Tragiker-fragmente und ihrer Wirkungsgeschichte* (Göttingen 1991). When Burkert 1996a, 13 concludes: "Götter bleiben unverfügbar" this is a reference to a different phenomenon, namely the typically Greek type of relationship with the gods which does not allow man to lay a claim on the god by addressing him/her as "my god." See above p. 102.

[113] Especially when predestined fate takes the form of the inevitability of death. Cf. also below nn. 158 and 159. The inflexibility of 'fate,' *heimarmene* or 'the gods', does not prevent ancient man from praying to individual gods. See: L. Lenaz, *Regitur fato si Iuppiter ipse …*: Una postilla al *Carmen contra paganos*, in: *Perennitas. Studi in onore di Angelo Brelich* (Roma 1980) 293–309, espec. 298–305.

[114] This is a characteristic that 'the gods' share with the Xenophanean one. As Empedocles says of his god: "It is not possible to reach to god and set him before our eyes, nor to grasp him with our hands." Or Feyerabend 1986, 210 on the traditional gods as opposed to the Xenophanean one: "Diese konnte man ja noch verstehen, man konnte sie beeinflüssen, man konnte sie sogar an der Nase herumführen, man konnte sie durch Opfer, Bitten, Argumente von unerwünschten Handlungen abbringen—zur Welt die sie lenkten, gab es ein persönliches Verhältnis." There is some likeness here with the god Hades, who is (nearly entirely) devoid of altars and sacrifices. A scholion on Homer (*ad Il.* 9.158) attributes this to his inexorable nature. Eur. *Alc.* 424 calls him ἄσπονδος θεός.

[115] Mikalson 1989, 86, on classical Athens: "οἱ θεοί as a group lack all the definitions of locale, cult site, and function which chararacterize practised religion. οἱ θεοί, like daimon, is a conceptual, not a cult term. Athenians, in the classical period, at least, did not make prayers to οἱ θεοί in these terms. (….) Prayers to 'the gods' whether they be successful or not, are a literary device—meaning little more than 'I pray' or 'I strongly hope.'" Cf. *idem* 1983, 68. Votive texts to 'the gods and the goddesses' (mostly but not always in Latin) with the text *Dis deabusque secundum inter-*

of your problems, you appeal to one or more personal gods—if need be to "all the gods"—with prayer and sacrifice.[116] In cases of sudden incalculable and unexpected calamities, however, the Greek perspective easily shifts from *a* god to a more abstract notion such as *the* god, or the *gods*,[117] or even something "more than a god," not to seek remedy, however, but to find a cause or an explanation. As the nurse in Eur. *Hippolytus* 359 f. comments on the cause of Phaedra's illegal love:

> Sure no goddess Cypris (Aphrodite) is,
> But, if it may be, something more than a God,
> (ἀλλ' εἴ τι μεῖζον ἄλλο γίγνεται θεοῦ)
> Who hath ruined her, and me, and all this house.

No sacrifice, no wishing prayer, I said, because what is predestined (either by arbitrary fate or by way of retribution) cannot be escaped, not even by a god. The only exception to this rule is at the same time its most gratifying confirmation. Just as the cause of unfathomable events cannot be "a god but must be something more than a god," so the inexplicable sacrifice that is something more than sacrifice cannot be associated with *a* god. I am referring to human sacrifice, particularly self-sacrifice as it is demanded and executed in numerous myths.

---

pretationem oraculi Clari Apollinis do occur in later antiquity, namely in a series of inscriptions known from various parts of the Empire, all versions of the same oracle from Klaros, propagated perhaps on the initiative of Caracalla after his consultation of the oracle in 213 AD. The oracle may have recommended to continue worshipping the traditional Olympian gods, although they ranked below the highest god. See: S. Mitchell, Inscriptions from Meli (Kocaaliler) in Pisidia, *AS* 53 (2003) 139–159, with a new Greek sample; EBGR 2003, no. 116; C.P. Jones, Ten Dedications "To the Gods and Goddesses" and the Antonine Plague, *JRA* 18 (2005) 293–301; Busine 2005, 184–189; Chaniotis 2010, 117 f.

[116] A striking corroboration can be found in the fourteenth book of the *Odyssey*, which is brimful of references to 'Zeus', 'god' or the 'gods' as agents of some good but more often bad experiences, but never in the context of prayer or sacrifice. When at last Eumaios prepares a sacrifice (414 ff. See below Chapter IV. p. 367 f.), the first prayer is to "all the gods" (423 ff.) who are beseeched to bring Odysseus safely home. Just so Odysseus is advised to sacrifice to all the gods for a safe trip home, *Od.* 11.132 ff.

[117] See Nicolai 2005, 22–29, who argues that the personal and a-personal images of deity are perfectly compatible in the mind of the believer exactly because "jede von beiden einerseits nur eine—jeweils durch einen individuellen Erfahrungshorizont bestimmte—anthropogene Schöpfung darstellt (….), andererseits aber zugleich eine ganz bestimmte situationsbedingte Funktion zu erfüllen hat." He argues that in a hopeless situation man needs to resort to a personal god to whom he can pray for help and salvation. In a more philosophical reflective context it is rather the god(s) as highest principle of causation that man relies on for explanation and comfort. Cf. Nilsson *GGR* I, 219: "in diesen kollektiven oder unbestimmten Bezeichnungen wird das individuelle verwischt."

Demanded by whom? With one or two exceptions never by an individual god, for as Plutarch says in his *Life of Pelopidas* 21, "such a barbaric and unlawful sacrifice could not possibly please any of the gods" (οὐδενὶ τῶν κρειττόνων). It was not any of the gods, but 'the gods', anonymous gods, who were the authorities that were consistently credited with the ultimate claim to this "sacrifice more than sacrifice."[118]

As in our earlier discussion of Xenophanes, here again we descry two at first sight not easily compatible conceptions of the divine world, which nonetheless are both experienced as simultaneously true and valid. Nilsson *GGR* I 761 was right when he wrote: "Herodot war eben so guter Polytheist wie irgendeiner seiner Zeitgenossen." But those who have detected monotheistic tendencies in his cosmology are equally right.[119] Again we observe two different but co-existing layers of divine conceptualization, each embedded in its own type of discourse, and we observe that, like Xenophanes, Herodotus saw no problem in professing mildly—albeit far from Xenophanean—monotheistic ideas side by side to a traditional polytheism.[120] Both conceptions are juxtaposed and intertwined, throughout his work, sometimes influencing each other. For, albeit above-individual, the concept of the anonymous divine authority is not as purely abstract as the *heis theos* of Xenophanes. The mechanical working of divine retribution and compensation by 'the gods' can be expressed in more 'affective' terms: the universal law of alternation that the excessively prosperous have to fear may alternate with divine envy, thus at least terminologically 'humanizing' the mechanical law into a more anthropomorphic affect.[121]

---

[118] Versnel 1981b, espec. 171–179. Comparably in funerary texts it is never one specific god but always anonymous gods, 'the gods' (sometimes with predicates like *iniqui* or *iniusti*), who are blamed for premature death. See below n. 158.

[119] Which does not make him a "closet monotheist" as Harrison 2000, 179 rightly notes. When he adds "The use of singular nouns (…) no more reflects a resolute monotheism than plurals suggest a radical polytheism" the emphasis should be placed on 'resolute' and 'radical'.

[120] This by no means involves that Herodotus should be a "follower of Xenophanes," as has been argued by E. Hussey in an unpublished essay on 'The Religious Opinions of Herodotus' as quoted by Gould 1994, 94 n. 7. Nor was he a disciple of Anaximander. Thus: P.S. Derow, Historical Explanation: Polybius and his Predecessors, in: S. Hornblower (ed.), *Greek Historiography* (Oxford 1994) 78, as contested by Harrison 1997, 112, and *idem* 2000, 116. Their respective religious cosmologies widely differ.

[121] For divine envy in archaic Greek literature see above Ch. II n. 72. More generally: S. Ranulf, *The Jealousy of the God and Criminal Law at Athens* (London-Kopenhagen

If, then, the notion of 'the gods' becomes near identical to the all-embracing power of Fate, there is no systematization of the precise relationship between the two. In the words of Nilsson *GGR* I 761:

> In Fate he perceives the divine in action, without questioning the relationship between inescapable Fate and divine power.[122]

Nor is there any explicit reflection on the precise relationship between freedom and responsibility in human action and the arbitrary omnipotence of 'the gods'. Numerous are the reports of events—especially catastrophic ones—that are prepared by the gods or the god, but enacted by man (Hdt. 7.8a 1; 7.139.5; 8.109.3).[123]

As noted earlier Herodotus was a *traît d'union* between the archaic period that preceded and the ideas of the fourth century and the Hellenistic period that followed. The terms *ho theos, hoi theoi, to theion, ho daimon, hoi daimones* referring to an anonymous and mysteriously interfering supernatural power abound in Greek idiom of all periods.[124] François 1957 offers a full survey of the evidence[125] and thus extends the data so characteristic of Herodotus' theology to different periods and authors, from Homer via archaic poetry, 5th century tragedy and historiography,[126] to 4th century rhetoric and philosophy. *Ho theos* and *ho daimon* in open contexts, so he sums up, practically never denote 'un Dieu unique et personnel'. Significantly, the only exception seems to be Xenophanes, whose One God does designate one specific divine

---

1933); P. Walcot, *Envy and the Greeks: A Study of Human Behaviour* (Warminster 1978); Aalders 1979; M.W. Dickie, Lo *phthonos* degli dei nella letteratura greca del quinto secolo a. Christo, *Atena e Roma* 32 (1987) 113–125.

[122] "Im Schicksal sieht er das göttliche Wirken, ohne nach dem Verhältnis zwischen dem unentrinnbaren Schicksal und der göttlichen Macht zu fragen."

[123] See Ch. II n. 30. Most recently: Harrison 1997, 107 f. also on the technique of 'let-out clauses' involved. Cf. more generally: Harrison 2000, Ch. 9 'Fate and Human Responsibility.'

[124] Often Zeus is preferred as a general term indicating the supreme divine power or Fate. Celebrated passages are the hymn for Zeus in Aesch. *Ag.* 160 ff., "das eindrucksvollste Zeugnis aischyleischer Religion": A. Lesky, *Die Griechische Tragödie* (Stuttgart 1958) 103. Cf. p. 65: "Zeus und Schicksal bedeuten das Gleiche." Cf. further: "Zeus is the universe—and what is still higher than this" (Aesch. Fr. 70 *TrGf*); Hes. *Op.* 42 and 47, where the same act is ascribed first to 'the gods', then to Zeus. See also below n. 161.

[125] The attestations in Herodotus at pp. 201–209. Cf. also G. Soleri, Politeismo e monoteismo nel vocabulario teologico della letteratura greca da Omero a Platone, *Rivista di Studi Classici* 8 (1960) 24–56.

[126] For Xenophon see also: M. Sordi, Religione e guerra nel pensiero di Senophonte, in: M. Sordi (ed.), *Il pensiero sulla guerra nel mondo antico* (Milano 2001) 37–43, espec. 38 f.; Pownall 1998, 255 n. 22 and *passim*.

entity.[127] Everywhere else, as we saw, the singular (*ho theos*) and plural (*hoi theoi*), denoting the same idea, freely alternate in the very same contexts.

After Herodotus, with in his wake Xenophon, especially in his *Hellenika*, as an important transition point,[128] the idiom remains popular, but a significant shift becomes apparent in the rise of Tuche (Fortune, Luck, "die Signatur des beginnenden Hellenismus")[129] as a rival designation. Fourth Century Athenian orators continued to appeal to religious arguments for purposes of persuasion.[130] The politicians Demosthenes, who opposed the Macedonian king Philippos, and Aeschines, who had long favoured the Macedonian, both had to admit in the end that the historical outcome of their policies was not in accordance with what they had intended or expected. Both readily took recourse to 'the God', *to daimonion*, or to Tuche, which are freely interchangeable.[131] Aeschin. 2.130–1: "It was Tuche first of all

---

[127] François 1975, 311: "Les conceptions de Xénophane constituent (..) une catégorie spéciale." Cf. Soleri *o.c.* (above n. 125) 55: "*theos* e *daimon* (…) mantengono costantemente un significato collettivo e generico; e nulla più (…). Unica eccezione, ben singolare, è Senofane."

[128] Pownall 1998.

[129] Nilsson *GGR* II, 301.

[130] For what follows I refer the reader to: H. Meuss, Die Vorstellungen von Gottheit und Schicksal bei den attischen Rednern—Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der griechischen Volksreligion, *Jahrb. f. Class. Phil.* 35 (1889) 445–476; D.B. King, The Appeal to Religion in Greek Rhetoric, *CJ* 50 (1954–5) 363–376; M. Vielberg, Die religiösen Vorstellungen der Redner Lykurg, *RhM* 134 (1991) 49–68; H. Montgomery, Piety and Persuasion: Mythology and Religion in Fourth-Century Athenian Oratory, in: P. Hellström & B. Alroth (edd.), *Religion and Power in the Ancient Greek World* (Proceedings of the Uppsala Symposium 1993, Uppsala 1996) 125–132. A particularly helpful survey: Mikalson 1983, Ch. 8 (pp. 53–62) 'The Nature of Divine Intervention,' and Ch. 9 (pp. 63–73) 'The Nature of the gods.' His vision is slightly biased though, as has often been noticed, by his near exclusive leaning on works of orators and epigraphical texts in contrast to tragedy or other literary genres.

[131] As noted by von Wilamowitz *ad* Dem. *De cor.* 193: "nichts Bestimmtes, geschweige Persönliches wird dabei empfunden." Cf. H. Wankel, *Rede für Ktesiphon über den Kranz* II (Heidelberg 1976) 908 ff. On the rise and bloom of these two concepts in the Hellenistic period see: G. Sfameni Gasparro, Daimôn and Tuchê in the Hellenistic Religious Experience, in: P. Bilde *et alii* (edd.), *Conventional Values of the Hellenistic Greeks* (Aarhus 1997) 67–109. On Tyche in New Comedy: G. Vogt-Spira, *Dramaturgie des Zufalls: Tyche und Handeln in der Komödie Menanders* (Munich 1992), with interesting conclusions concerning the multiple forms of relationship between the action of the human being and the interference of tyche/Tyche. On the Greek novel: M. Alperowitz, *Das Wirken und Walten der Götter im griechischen Roman* (Biblioth. klass. Altert. NF 88, 1992) Ch. 5 "Schicksalsmächte" pp. 59–88 with Tyche at 75–87, an analysis of the arbitrary, negative imagery of Tyche, in some works envisioned as a personal, in others as an impersonal abstract power. However, in accordance with its focus on a 'happy ending' the novel may also accept an overall divine justice:

that ruined the Phocians, and she is mistress of all things" (Τύχη ἡ πάντων ἐστι κυρία). Dem. *De cor.* 193: "You must not accuse me (….) for the event was in god's hand not mine", which, later (252), is varied into: "it is a stupid thing for any human being to reproach his brother man on the score of fortune." From the fourth century onwards we can follow Tuche's rise to the central position held by 'the gods' in earlier expressions. Most significantly, in the same period the 'envy of the gods' is gradually replaced by the 'enviousness of Fate.'[132]

2. *Concluding remarks*

The term *hoi theoi* as the semantic plural of—and hence clearly distinct from—*ho theos*, designates the total multitude of traditional individual gods *as* individual gods, and in that sense practically equals 'all the gods', as exemplified in Plato's advice: "one must praise all the gods" as discussed in Appendix I. *'All* the gods' can be addressed in prayer. They even boast cultic worship, as we shall see. Herodotean *(hoi) theoi* as a generic expression, though grammatically a plural, from a semantic point of view refers to a unity, a oneness, signifying one all-governing divine principle. Here *hoi theoi* is *not* distinct from but, on the contrary, semantically equals *ho theos* and *to theion.* The two different notions covered by the same plural *hoi theoi*, though prone to confusion, as a rule can be well distinguished if viewed in their respective contexts. But if we do not have a context the choice will be less obvious. Consequently, I would not be so sure which of the two possible denotations (or if one prefers: connotations) is the dominant one in the topical opening words of official decrees in Athenian inscriptions: *theoi.*[133]

K. Waldner, Die poetische Gerechtigkeit der Götter: Recht und Religion im griechischen Roman, in: D. Elm von der Osten *e.a.* (edd.), *Texte als Medium und Reflexion von Religion im römischen Reich* (Stuttgart 2006) 101–123.

[132] Aalders 1979. Tuche and Fate become near equivalents in this period.

[133] Accordingly, there has been much guessing around about the 'real' meaning of this heading. R.L. Pounder, The Origin of *theoi* as Inscription-Heading, in: *Studies Presented to Sterling Dow* (Durham 1984) 243–250, gives a survey and a new interpretation (245): "*theoi* is not a dedicatory formula, nor a formal appeal for good fortune, nor an indication that suitable religious rites had been performed. Rather (…) its presence on the stone may be best explained as harking back to an early religious element, imprecatory and apotropaic in nature." How complicated things may be becomes apparent in the opening of the *iamata* inscriptions at Epidauros, which has in the upper left Θεός, in the upper right Τύχα ἀγαθά, and in the next line the title:

Concerning the relationship of monotheism and polytheism in Herodotus I here summarize our findings in a felicitous formulation by Linforth:[134]

> Though the multiplicity of gods is never called in question, there is a disposition to speak of the divine element in the world *as if* it were characterized by the indivisibility of the god of the pure monotheist.

As if, as we will note in several chapters of this book, is perhaps the most productive and promising strategy in religion.

Throughout their history the different notions of anonymous divine intervention share a central function: they are conceptual devices deployed to convey sense to the inexplicable by anchoring it in an ultimate authority, even if this implies the acknowledgement of the limitations of human knowledge in these matters.[135] While Xenophanes' God helps us explain *how* the (material) world *is* (hence is 'good to think [with]'), 'the god' or 'the gods' of Herodotus (and of his predecessors and successors) help us understand *why* (catastrophic) events *happen* in human life, and so to accept them (they are 'good to suffer with').[136] The first is the revolutionary creation by one individual, the latter ones are moulded by the collective imagery of a civilization. Together they are basic instruments "to create a world of meaning in the context of which human life can be significantly lived."[137] Inherent in their common function, both types of gods also share a nearly complete lack of worship in terms of statues, altars, temples, cult, and, most relevant: prayer.

While Herodotus' 'gods' may reflect either the arbitrary, or the moral or the mechanical principles of alternation or retaliation, Tuche is essentially an arbitrary and capricious power in accordance with her

---

Ἰάματα τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος καὶ τοῦ Ἀσκλαπίου. It would be a mistake to take *theos* as referring to (one of) the two Epidaurian gods.

[134] Linforth 1928, 218. Although, as noted above n. 99, I cannot accept the overall view on which it is based.

[135] Gould 1994, 94 and more extensively on the 'uncertainty principle': Gould 1985, espec. 9–14.

[136] 'Good to think (with)' is perhaps the most characteristic expression of the 'école de Paris' (including Vernant, after Lévi-Strauss). For a discussion see Cl. Geertz' celebrated 'Religion as a Cultural System', in: Geertz 1973, 87–125. See also: Burkert 1996a, 26 f.: "Affliction is made bearable by an ultimate if non-empirical answer to the grieving one's question, 'why'." Cf. Harrison 1997, 108: "The gods act then as a kind of outside regulatory body of human attempts at justice," adding, however: "This is, of course, to reduce a complex web of religious beliefs to a simple formula."

[137] T.F. O'Dea, *The Sociology of Religion* (Englewoods Cliffs 1966) 5.

nature: Fortune, Luck, Chance. *Not* by chance it was exactly this power that from the late classical period onwards did receive divine honours, was worshipped with sacrifices and statues in temples dedicated to her, and—especially as Agathe Tuche (Good Fortune)—grew into a great goddess: an astounding strategy for domesticating the fearfully arbitrary power of Chance. Many *poleis* had their protecting Tuche, as did kings.[138] However great, the goddess remained whimsical and (for that reason?) never ousted the other gods. We shall meet this "Mistress of all things" again in the next section.

4. "One is the God"[139]

1. *Praising the god*

Heis (ho) theos ('one is the god!'): this is the acclamation that resounded far and wide in the Greek speaking eastern part of the Roman world

[138] For Tyche as a goddess see: A.A. Buriks, *PERI TUCHES* (Diss. Leiden 1945); G. Herzog-Hauser, *RE* VII (1948) 1643–1689; Nilsson *GGR* 361 ff.; U. von Wilamowitz, *Der Glaube der Hellenen* II (Darmstadt 1959[3] = 1955[2]) 295–305; Mikalson 1983, 53–62. *LIMC* VIII 1 (1997) 115–117.

[139] As indicated above this section is a very condensed version of various parts of my *TER UNUS*, to which I refer the reader for more ample substantiation of what I am here summarizing. After this chapter was finished, I had the chance to read first drafts of the papers now published as Belayche 2010 and Chaniotis 2010, briefly announced in Chaniotis-Chiai 2007. Both offer fresh, detailed, and important treatments of themes connected with the notion of henotheism, focussing more than I did on their social and political contexts. Thus they present a welcome substantiation as well as an illuminating amplification of what I had argued in *TER UNUS*. Since their main arguments and conclusions in all respects concur with mine I have largely maintained my present text as it was, updating ancient evidence and modern bibliography wherever it seemed useful. After the completion of this chapter G.F. Chiai sent me drafts of a number of his articles most of them in print at that time: Il villaggio ed il suo dio: considerazioni sulla concorrenza religiosa nelle comunità rurali dell'Asia Minore in epoca romana, *Mythos. Rivista di Storia delle Religioni* n.s. 1 (2006–2007) 137–164; Allmächtige Götter und fromme Menschen im ländlichen Kleinasien der Kaiserzeit, *Millennium Jahrbuch* 6 (2009) 61–106; Perchè un dio è potente? Considerazioni sull' enoteismo e sulla costruzione del divino in Asia Minore (forthcoming *SMSR* 2010). They all concern the religious and cultural mentality typical of the henotheistic cults of Asia Minor as discussed in the works of scholars mentioned above as well as in the present section, and are particularly useful for their collections of the epigraphical evidence. On occurrence and meaning of the cheer *heis (ho) theos* see most recently: C. Markchies, *Heis Theos?* Religionsgeschichte und Christentum bei Erik Peterson, in: B. Nichtweiss (ed.), *Vom Ende der Zeit. Geschichtstheologie und Eschatologie bei Erik Peterson* (*Sympos. Mainz*) (Münster 2001) 38–74; *idem* 2002. Cf. also next note.

of the Hellenistic and Imperial era down to the sixth century AD.[140] Nor is it lacking in Christian literature.[141] We recover the expression—often applied as a protective spell[142]—engraved in amulets, rings, gems and other objects, inscribed in stone and written in papyri as well as in (especially religious) literature. With this acclamation we broach our third 'experiment in oneness', the theology which is generally referred to as 'henotheism'.

The term 'henotheism' is a modern formation canonized by Max Müller,[143] only later, in the study of Hellenistic religions, associated with and redefined in the light of the acclamation *heis (ho) theos*. In anticipation of a demonstration given below and in accordance with the provisional definition given above p. 244, we can state for the moment that the acclamation does not necessarily imply monotheistic notions ('there is no other god *except* this god'), although this connotation may understandably creep in from time to time.[144] As a

---

[140] "Man stolpert (….) förmlich über εἷς θεός-inschriften," thus Markschies 2002, 213, speaking about Syria in 5th c. AD. The basic collection has long been Petersson 1926. Further attestations and discussions also in the works of Weinreich and Nock. There has been a host of more recent publications of single acclamations especially in papyri and on gems. At the moment of writing Markschies' revised and augmented edition of Peterson is in the press. See Markschies 2002, where he demonstrates the differences in the connotations of the expression among Christians, Jews, Samaritans in late antiquity, *inter alia* referring to a find of more than 70 new texts in Samaria on which see: L. Di Segni, Εἷς θεός in Palestinian Inscriptions, *SCI* 13 (1994) 94–115. Cf. also Fürst 2006.

[141] As it is still alive in modern Greek. At Good Friday the children chant: "ένας είναι ο θεός" (God is one) (Friedl 1962, 102). Curiously enough, in the period in which Christians exploited the cheer to distinguish their creed from that of the pagans, milestones in Palestine seem to counter this propaganda by acclaiming the 'neo-pagan' emperor Julian thus: εἷς θεός, εἷς Ἰουλιανὸς ὁ Αὔγουστος (*vel* βασιλεύς) (Peterson 1926, 271) and εἷς θ[εός], νίκ[α], Ἰουλι[ανέ] (*SEG* 41.1544).

[142] The acclamation of a god as 'one' is often closely connected with expressions of his outstanding soteriological qualities. "One is the god who heals every sickness," claims a magical papyrus published by D. Wortmann, Neue magische Texte, *BJ* 168 (1968) no. 7, p. 105 (= Betz *PGM* XCIX; *Suppl.Mag.* 33), who failed to notice that this is just a slightly elaborated version of a very common acclamation: εἷς θεὸς ὁ βοηθῶν/βοηθός ('One is God the helper/healer'): Petersson 1926, *passim*.

[143] above p. 244.

[144] Significantly, when it does, there may still remain inconsistencies. We saw above (n. 8) that Paul 1 Cor. 8:4–6, says that "we know that (…) there is no God but one," (οὐδεὶς θεὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς), which doubtless refers to a monotheistic conception. However, this phrase is immediately followed by an undiluted polytheistic statement. Cf. Wengst 1967, 132: "Dass diese Übernahme in den christlichen Bereich nicht eine völlige Uminterpretation im Sinne des Monotheismus bedeutete, sondern dass der elative Sinn noch erhalten blieb, zeigt der Kontext von 1 Kor 8:6, wenn Paulus die Einzigkeit des Kyrios Jesus im Gegenüber zu den vielen Kyrioi betont, deren Existenz

rule, it implies a personal devotion to one god ('there is no other god *like* this god') without involving rejection or neglect of other gods. As such this acclamation discloses a shift in religious attitudes of the Hellenistic and Imperial periods which, although not strictly monotheistic and not necessarily a *praeparatio* to the adoption of monotheism, belongs among the most striking of all antiquity. To be sure, the Mediterranean population did not *en masse* convert or adhere to henotheistic types of devotion, no more than it massively converted to the so-called 'Oriental religions'. On the contrary, henotheism seems to have remained a somewhat sectarian phenomenon of an essentially competitive nature. However, this did not prevent many of its features from permeating established types of religion as well. As such it is certainly one of the most characteristic hallmarks of what Veyne 1986 calls "le second paganisme" of the second and third centuries AD. Various features, however, can be perceived long before this period and it is here that we shall start our exposition.

As it is impossible to embark upon a detailed treatment of all the different aspects of henotheism, I select three topics for brief discussion: 1) the typical characteristics of the religious mentality implied in this conception, 2) the concept of 'oneness' in terms such as Greek *heis*, feminine: *mia; monos,* feminine: *monê*; and Lat. *unus/una, solus/sola*, 3) the question of origins. This disposition may cause some surprise if not suspicion. Why not focus first and foremost on the denotation of the central element of henotheism: the term *heis*? The answer is that it is practically unfeasible to determine precisely what acclamative *heis* ('one') *de*notes—not surprisingly when dealing with acclamations—so that the maximum we can hope to recover is what the term *con*notes—not surprisingly when dealing with a religious expression. It might even be argued that acclamative *heis* does not 'denote' at all, but instead summarizes, hence evokes, a set of connotations, without which the expression cannot be understood at all.[145]

---

er in v. 5 einraümt." On the use of the formula *heis theos* in connection with the process of christianisation see: F.R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization* I–II (Leiden-New York 1993–1994), I, 120 ff.; II, 313 ff.; Fürst 2006. For a recent—brief but informative—discussion of henotheism in (late) antiquity, in accordance with my own ideas, see Eich 2010, 101–110.

[145] On religious acclamations and the diversity of their meanings and implications see: Chaniotis 2010, 123, with ample literature in nn. 46 ff.; *idem*, Acclamation as a Form of Religious Communication', in: H. Cancik & J. Rüpke (edd.), *Die Religion des Imperium Romanum: Koine und Konfrontationen* (Tübingen 2009) 199–218. Interest-

However, a quest for connotations requires insight into the religious ambience in which the predicate *heis* belongs, in other words a delineation of the religious *Sitz im Leben* of henotheism. In order to achieve this we shall proceed in two steps.

First, we shall focus our attention on the goddess Isis. Not only was she an eminently henotheistic deity in that she was consistently—and one of the first to be—acclaimed as being "One," but her specific qualities were also lauded in extensive hymns, called 'aretalogies' or 'praises'. A brief summary of such an aretalogy will also offer the most convenient avenue to a first, provisional discussion of the ethnocultural roots of this belief system. Next, more generally, we shall draw up an inventory of the most conspicuous elements of the theology involved as exemplified in a variety of different religious expressions, all of them indicative of the religiosity concerning gods who are praised as 'one' or at the least as uniquely great.

2. *Aretalogy*

An aretalogy is a laudatory description of the miraculous power (*arete*) of a god. The longest and best-known is the Isis aretalogy of Kume[146] (further referred to as K). Like other samples of these liturgical panegyrics, often publicized as a token of gratitude and/or for propagandistic purposes, it was inscribed on stone.[147] The remarkable resemblance

---

ing discussions on the socio-psychological mechanism of the acclamation in Roman times: G.S. Aldrete, *Gestures and Acclamations in Ancient Rome* (Baltimore 1999).

[146] Apart from many specialized studies and editions of various versions of the same aretalogy in other inscriptions or literary texts, the text of K can be found e.g. in W. Peek, *Der Isishymnus von Andros und verwandte Texte* (Berlin 1930); R. Harder, *Karpokrates von Chalkis und die memphitische Isispropaganda, Abh. Berlin* 1943 (1944), Grandjean 1975, *IG* XII Suppl. pp. 98/9, Totti 1985 no. 1. A translation in: F.C. Grant, *Hellenistic Religions* (Indianapolis 1980 = 1953) 131 ff. For full bibliography and discussion of K and other aretalogies, the genre aretalogy in general, its nature and origin, I refer to *TER UNUS* 37–52. On the aretalogy of Harpokrates from Chalkis see recently: R. Matthey, Retour sur l'hymne "arétalogique" de Karpokrate a Chalcis, *ARG* 9 (2007) 191–222.

[147] Besides these aretalogies there were other means to extol the majesty of the god(dess), for instance by relating a specific miracle or even by collecting these stories in miracle books. The two types could be combined, as for example in the hymn of Maronea (Grandjean 1975), "the only surviving sophistic encomium to a deity of the Hellenistic ages" (D. Papanikolaou, The Aretalogy of Isis from Maroneia and the Question of Hellenistic "Asianism," *ZPE* 168 [2009] 59–70, espec. 67). Many of these *aretai* are reproduced by Longo 1969. They are discussed by Nock 1933, 84 ff., MacMullen 1981, 10 ff., Versnel 1981a, 54–62, with special attention to the aspect of *marturia*.

of the various versions of this aretalogy that have come down to us strongly suggests a common origin. Half a century of fierce scholarly debate has not yielded a consensus on the original nature of the supposed prototype, whose cradle, according to legend, stood in Memphis. On the one hand they display numerous non-Greek, particularly Egyptian, elements that are obvious to any reader and denied by none. Not only are they unequivocally present in such proclamations as: "I invented the letters together with Hermes (= Egyptian Thot)" (K 3c), or "I am the wife and sister of Osiris" (K 6), but also in "I divided earth from heaven" (K 12), an act of creation that no Greek god could boast.[148] Stylistically, a series of *Ego*-proclamations in which a god proclaims his wondrous powers (*dunameis)* is un-Greek.[149] Though certainly not lacking in Greek literature (see Ch. V), expressions of omnipotence composed of two polar qualities such as "I soothe the sea and make it turbulent" (K 43) and "I make the navigable unnavigable whenever it pleases me" (K 50) have their roots in the ancient Near East.[150] Nor is a *parallelismus membrorum* like the one at the end of the Isis aretalogy cited below typical of Greek literature, although both tropes are not completely lacking.[151] On the other hand, in 1949 the two major

---

[148] I do not recognize anything really comparable in Hesiod *Th.* 126 ff.; 173 ff., to which F. Solmsen, *Isis among the Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge Mass. 1980) 133 n. 48, refers. The fragments of an Orphic theogony in the Derveni Papyrus (M.L. West, *The Orphic Poems* [Oxford 1983] 68–115; A. Laks & G.W. Most [edd.], *Studies in the Derveni Papyrus* [Oxford 1997]); G. Betegh, *The Derveni Papyrus. Cosmology, Theology and Interpretation* [Cambridge 2004]; Th. Kouremenos, G.M. Parássoglou & K. Tsantsanoglou, *The Derveni Papyrus. Edited with Introduction and Commentary* [Florence 2006]), do explain the castration of Ouranos by Kronos as the separation of heaven and earth. But there cannot be any doubt as to the strong Near-Eastern influences here, since the same text adds that Zeus swallowed the genitals of Ouranos and became pregnant, which clearly goes back to the Kumarbi myth. See: W. Burkert, Oriental and Greek Mythology: The Meeting of Parallels, in: Bremmer 1987, 10–40, espec. 22.

[149] See for a discussion: *TER UNUS* 43 n. 10.

[150] An exhaustive list of such polar expressions of omnipotence in *PGM* I, 96–132. There are even stronger statements of this type in *P.Oxy* 1380 (Totti 1985 no. 20), ll. 195/6: "you, mistress of growth and destruction," and above all ll. 175 ff.: "and you give destruction to whom you like, and to those that are destroyed you give growth." Fowden 1986, 49, deems it likely that part of the invocation is a translation from an Egyptian text. No need to recall that this type of expression is particularly characteristic of the OT, for instance in Deut. 32:39, "I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal."

[151] The evidence in Greek literature: *TER UNUS* 43 n. 11, and below in Chapter V, pp. ##.

experts on Hellenistic religion, A.D. Nock and A.J. Festugière,[152] independently (and forcefully) attacked the theory of a wholesale Egyptian origin contending that the original text must have been written in Greek since it contained numerous basically Greek concepts. For reasons of space I cannot go into this discussion here and shall only repeat my personal conviction that the aretalogies of Isis are a genuinely *Hellenistic* creation—very comparable to the creation of the god Sarapis himself—in which Greek elements have been amalgamated with Egyptian-oriental ones.[153]

Let us return now to the aretalogy of Kyme. In the first line Isis proclaims her absolute sovereignty: "I am Isis, the mistress of every land." Then a breathless series of some fifty *Ego* proclamations articulates the goddess as the one who has created (divided) heaven and earth, who has defined the laws of nature and who (sometimes arbitrarily) manipulates the physical elements. After having invented agriculture she was the one who initiated social order and civilization by introducing language, justice, religion, moral codes and love. After a preliminary formula of omnipotence in ll. 46/7: "What pleases me, that shall be finished; for me everything makes way," the hymn ends with the unsurpassed and unsurpassable climax (ll. 55/6):

> I overcome Fate,
> Fate harkens to me.

The two lines can be understood as comprehensive formulas in which Isis' supremacy over life and death, including sickness, perils and disaster, is proclaimed. The first Hymn of Isidorus[154] (2nd or 1st c. BC) 26–34, articulates this in exemplary soteriological formulas:

---

[152] A.D. Nock, *Gnomon* 21 (1949) 221–228 = Nock 1972 II, 703–711; A.J. Festugière, A propos des arétalogies d'Isis, *HThR* 42 (1949) 209–234 = Festugière 1972, 138–163. For a full discussion see: *TER UNUS* 41–44.

[153] This is also the opinion of major specialists such as L.Vidman, J. Leclant, J. Gwyn Griffiths, G. Fowden. This view is supported by an undeniable similarity with Egyptian hymns for Isis, found at Philae and published by L.V. Zabkar, Six Hymns to Isis in the Sanctuary of her Temple at Philae and their Theological Significance, *JEA* 69 (1983) 115–137; *idem, Hymns to Isis in Her Temple at Philae* (Hannover-London 1988), belonging to the period of Ptolemy II Philadelphos. Very important parallels in demotic hymns from 2nd c. BC into 2nd c. AD have now been collected in: H. Kockelmann, *Praising the Goddess: A Comparative and Annotated Re-edition of Six Demotic Hymns and Praises Addressed to Isis* (Berlin-New York 2008).

[154] Found in 1935 at Medinet Madi in the Fayum. The major publication is: Vanderlip 1972, whose translation I here adopt. Cf. also: É. Bernand, *Les inscriptions métriques de l'Égypte gréco-romaine* (Paris 1969) 631–652; Totti 1985 no. 21 ff.

> Deathless Saviour, many-named, mightiest Isis,
> Saving from war cities and all their citizens:
> Men, their wives, possessions and children.
> As many as are bound fast in prison, in the power of death,
> As many as are in pain through anguished, sleepless nights,
> All who are wanderers in a foreign land,
> And as many as sail on the Great Sea in winter
> When men may be destroyed and their ships wrecked and sunk,
> All are saved if they pray that You be present to help.

Line 4 has literally: "in the fatal destiny of death." This is a crucial formula, for, like the final lines of the aretalogy of Kume, it represents an early anticipation of what was to develop into one of Isis' most specific qualities during the imperial period. From the beginning of the second century AD onwards, we find Isis glorified for having the power to shift the boundaries that determine the measured time of life, i.e. for being victorious over fate.[155] In this she is matched by her consort Sarapis, who proclaims:[156] "for I change Fate" (lit. "change the clothes of Fate"). This is a commentary as it were on K 55/6 quoted above, and though certainly not an assurance of blissful immortality in the netherworld,[157] it definitely exalts Isis above the ranks of other, and in particular the Greek gods, to whom, as we saw above, Herodotus' words applied: "fate cannot be escaped, not even by a god."[158] As we have seen, the only Greek god who sometimes managed to ransom a favourite mortal from death, albeit for a limited period, was Apollo,[159]

---

[155] *Eg.* Apul. *Metam.* 11.6, "you shall know that I alone have power to prolong your life also beyond the span determined by your destiny"; *cf.* 11.25.

[156] In a papyrus of the 3rd c. AD. Ed. pr. Abt, *ARW* 18 (1915) 257. Totti 1985 no. 12, where a full bibliography is presented. Cf. also Weinreich 1969, I 410.

[157] As Cumont once understood it. See: *TER UNUS* 47 ff.

[158] A funerary inscription (*Syll.*[3] 889) informs us that "neither by flattery, nor by supplication, nor by tears will man ever be able to overstep the boundaries of the predestined," thus summarizing a stock *topos* in literature which ranges from early lyric via Hellenistic poetry into epigrams, philosophical and astrological works of the Roman period. Cf. H. Wankel, 'Alle Menschen müssen sterben.' Variationen eines Topos der griechischen Literatur, *Hermes* 111 (1983) 129–154. Hence in cases of premature death 'the gods' and fate can equally be blamed for ill luck. Testimonia in A.D. Nock, *JRS* 30 (1940) 194 f.; R. Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epithaphs* (Urbana Ill. 1942) 142–158. Latin evidence: D. Pikhaus, *Levensbeschouwing en Milieu in de Latijnse Metrische Inscripties* (Bruxelles 1978) 117–126. Cf. above n. 113.

[159] Hdt. 1.91; cf. R. Riecks, Eine tragische Erzählung bei Herodot, *Poetica* 7 (1975) 23–44, espec. 32; Aesch. *Eum.* 723 ff.; Eur. *Alc.* prol.; cf. J.M. Bell, Euripides' Alcestis. A Reading, *Emerita* 48 (1980) 43–76 on the inevitability of *ananke* (here = inescapable fate). Even in the 250s AD Apollo still recalled how he had "shamed" the Fates and kept of an epidemic a century before: Lane Fox 1986, 231. On the other hand the

and the notion of divine victory over Fate or Predestination is not documented before the imperial period in religious texts outside Egypt.[160] A goddess who has the unique[161] power to overcome destiny and liberate men from the chafing bonds of inescapable fate may become a new Fate herself. And here, as promised above, Tuche emerges again. For Isis was readily identified with Tuche,[162] though in contradistinction to the blind and arbitrary Fortune she was a seeing and helpful one. The combat between the two is glorified in Apuleius *Metam.* 11.15.

All this has a consequence of crucial importance: a goddess who triumphs over Fate and moreover boasts an extensive series of matchless miraculous feats may lay claim to the most lofty titles. So does Isis in the first line of the aretalogy by calling herself sovereign (lit. *turannos*: tyrant) of all the land, in Egyptian ears probably referring to the land Egypt, in the Greek perception, no doubt understood as the whole civilized world. No god or goddess has such a variety of titles indicating unlimited power and sovereignty. The most frequent are: Queen (*basilissa*), Mistress (*despoina, anassa*) and Lady (*kuria*).[163] This divine absolutism in many respects imitates the model of the worldly autocracy so typical of Hellenistic kingship.[164]

---

prolongation of life belongs to the normal capabilities of Egyptian gods: Nock 1972 II, 705 n. 7; Gwyn Griffiths 1975, 166.

[160] In fact, the final lines of aretalogy K, whose model can be dated to the third or second century BC, are so exceptional in the context of Hellenistic religion that they have been explained as a later addition by no less a specialist than Festugière, who, however, recanted few years later.

[161] Zeus holding the scales of destiny in Homer is a rare exception to the rule. The Zeus who, in lyric poetry and sometimes in tragedy, is pictured as the highest lord of destiny (as e.g. in Archil. fr. 298 W.; cf. U. Bianchi, *Dios Aisa. Destino, uomini e divinità nell' epos, nelle teogonie e nel culto dei Greci* [Rome 1953]) may practically be identified with such notions as *hoi theoi, ho theos* and *to theion*, as we demonstrated earlier. Even the Christian god, once beyond the boundaries of the theologians' protectorate, is powerless (or nearly so) against the Fates. See above Ch. II nn. 158 f. In early Christian theology Christ or the Virgin Mother compete with Isis in the combat against Fate. They share this task with the great god of Gnostic and Hermetic speculation, also present in magical papyri. Outside this 'theosophy' the notion is rare.

[162] J. Bergman, I overcome Fate, Fate harkens to me. Some Observations on Isis as a Goddess of Fate, in: Ringren (ed.), *Fatalistic Beliefs in Religion, Folklore and Literature* (Stockholm 1967) 35–51; F. Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis dans le bassin oriental de la Méditerranée* (Leiden 1973) I, 92 f.; III, 271 ff.; Gwyn Griffiths 1975, 241–244; *idem*, The Concept of the Divine Judgement in the Mystery Religions, in: U. Bianchi & M.J. Vermaseren (edd.), *La soteriologia dei culti orientali nell' impero Romano* (Leiden 1982) 192–219, espec. 199 f.

[163] Collection and discussion: *TER UNUS* 66.

[164] Most especially the curious amalgamation of liberation and subjection, which is not of direct concern to our present issue, mirrors the two sides of Hellenistic mon-

If we now try to summarize the picture delineated so far we can best quote the famous cheers of the Ephesians—who apparently were addicted to acclamations—that "Isis is a great goddess."[165] 'Great', that is the most natural and common designation to indicate that the goddess towers above all other gods. And this, of course, is exactly the briefest summary of the hyperbolic ego-proclamations in the aretalogy: Isis can achieve what no other god is able to. She is not only great, she is *eminently and uniquely* great. In other words, she is the great champion in a divine competition for omnipotence.[166] Now, there are also

archy as I have argued at length in *TER UNUS* Ch.1 and in: 'Religious Projection: A Hellenistic Instance', in: L. Martin (ed.), *Religious Transformations and Socio-Political Change* (Berlin-New York 1993) 25–39.

[165] Xen. Ephes. 5, 13. Just as they acclaimed their own goddess with the words: "Great is the Artemis of the Ephesians" (Acts 19.28). Cf. *PGM* XXIV, 1, and parallels in Peterson 1926, 208; R. Merkelbach, *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike* (Munich-Berlin 1962) 111 f.; Gwyn Griffiths 1975, 238. Cf. Isis in an ancient glossary: "Isis, that is the great hope" (*P.Oxy* XLV.3239). This may refer to dream interpretations, as M. Marcovich, *ZPE* 29 (1978) 49, has suggested. For *elpis* in religious context see: F. Cumont, *Lux perpetua* (Paris 1949) 401–405; Versnel 1985, 256 ff.

[166] For this reason Chaniotis 2010, providing rich evidence of superlative language (129 f.) and especially *megas* in cheers and acclamations (134 f.), prefers to use the term 'megatheism' for this new type of religiosity, whose competitive context he emphasizes. As, in *TER UNUS* pp. 234–237, I myself have amply argued for elative 'great' as one of the meanings of the cheer *heis* in the agonistic ambiance which is the subject of Chaniotis' investigation, as had already been suggested before by L. Robert: "équivalence pratique entre *heis* et *megas*" (see below on the distinction between henotheistic and elative praises pp. 297 ff. with n. 203 and n. 212), I have nothing to object. In this context the two Greek words simply have the same meaning and the cheers may alternate. On the central significance of the notion 'great' see especially the fourth item of the nine characteristics of henotheistic religiosity below p. 290 f. and its more elaborated version in *TER UNUS* 194 ff. In later antiquity practically any god might claim the predicate 'great' or 'the greatest.' See for instance the collected inscriptions in: F. Kayser, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines (non funéraires) d'Alexandrie impériale (I^er^–III^e^ s. apr. J.-C.)* (Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 108) (Cairo 1994). More recently the dispute concerning the status of the Hypsistos Theos has been drawn into the discussion. See various contributions to Athanassiadi & Frede 1999; Y. Ustinova, *The Supreme Gods of the Bosporan Kingdom: Celestial Aphrodite and the Most High God* (Leiden 1999); M. Stein, Die Verehrung des Theos Hypsistos. Ein allumfassender pagan-jüdischer Synkretismus, *EA* 33 (2001) 119–125; G.W. Bowersock, The Highest God with Particular Reference to North-Pontus, *Hyperboreus* 8 (2002) 353–363; W. Wischmeyer, ΘΕΟΣ ΥΨΙΣΤΟΣ. Neues zu einer alten Debatte, *ZAC* 9 (2005) 149–168; Chaniotis-Chiai 2007, 118 n. 9; Fürst 2006, 505–510; N. Belayche, De la polysémie des épiclèses: ΥΨΙΣΤΟΣ dans le monde gréco-romain, in: Belayche e.a. 2005, 427–442; *eadem, Hypsistos*. Une voie de l'exaltation des dieux dans le polythéisme gréco-romain, *ARG* 7 (2007) 34–55; *eadem* 2008, n. 11, and the significant complication presented by the Thea Hypsiste in: Chaniotis 2010, 120. St. Mitchell defends his position in: Further Thoughts on the Cult of Theos Hypsistos, in: Mitchell & Van Nuffelen 2010, 167–208.

different ways to express this. In one of her aretalogies[167] Isis claims: "I, Isis, am the *one and only* sovereign of this era" (ἐγὼ τύραννος Εἴσις αἰῶνος μόνη). 'Alone', 'without rival', 'unique(ly)', that is what terms such as Greek *monos/monê*, used here as elsewhere for Isis, denote and as such they are another fitting summary of the aretalogies. The term also brings us very close to that other Greek expression, *heis* (fem. *mia*), Latin *unus/una,* with which the goddess is stereotypically acclaimed. *P.Oxy* 1380 l.6 even calls her τὴν μίαν: "*the* One." So it will be helpful to go into the meanings and functions of the term *monos*, as we shall do. But let us first have a glance at the more general characteristics of henotheistic religiosity, as collected from a broad range of evidence concerning Hellenistic gods (very much including Isis again) who—in opposition to the gods of classical Greece—claim a unique and superior status associated with notions of omnipotence.

3. *Nine characteristics of henotheistic religion*

Besides being 'one'—whatever this may imply—the henotheistic gods of the Hellenistic era such as Isis and Sarapis lay claim to modes of adoration that are often radically different from the ones known for traditional Greek religion. I have drawn a list of nine of these characteristics[168] and will each time present only one or two illustrations.

1. Cosmopolitan pretensions and claims to universal worship are characteristic of great Hellenistic gods, especially of Isis. For instance: "all mortals who live on the boundless earth, Thracians, Greeks, and Barbarians, express Your fair Name, a Name honoured among all."[169] Compare the expression "Tyrant of all land" in the Kume aretalogy.

2. If it is true that "miracle proves deity" (A.D. Nock),[170] it is no less true that, apart from a few scattered earlier instances, the first traces of a *structural* advertising function of miracles in Greece can

[167] Aretalogy of Cyrene, *SEG* 9.192.

[168] They match the nine features of Euripides' *Bacchae* which I analysed in *TER UNUS* 164–172, and summarized in Ch. I above pp. 140 f.

[169] The phrase is taken from one of the most extensive 'topographical' catalogues, viz. the first Isiac hymn of Isidorus ll.14 ff. (Totti 1985 no. 21), the most extensive being *P.Oxy* 1380. In her commentary Vanderlip 1972, *ad loc.* gives a survey of parallel expressions. Indicative are further fixed epithets such as: *polyonymos* and *murionymos* ("with many/innumerable names"), on which see above Chapter I, p. 55 f.

[170] Or "miracle proves Saint" as a modern Greek proverb says: ἅγιος ποῦ δὲν θαυματουργεῖ, δὲν δοξάζεται (a saint that does not work miracles, is not honoured).

be discovered in the late classical miracle records of Asklepios' at Epidauros (4th c. BC), as we shall discuss in Chapter V. Significantly, the earliest epigraphical attestation of the term *aretê* in the sense of 'miraculous divine intervention' likewise dates from the fourth century BC.[171] Both thus mark the dawn of the Hellenistic era. For, indeed, miracles and epiphanies adduced as proof of the greatness of a god are typical of certain trends in Hellenistic and later Roman religiosity.[172] Isis and Sarapis frequently exacted obedience and worship through visions or miracles and the same is true for other gods, including the god of the Christians.

3. *Makarismoi*, being expressions of beatitude due to divine blessings, are a common feature of Hellenistic piety. The curious confessions of personal devotion and the concomitant beatitude as exemplarily expressed in the eleventh book of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* have no exact parallel in classical literature, with the exception of Euripides' *Bacchae*.[173]

4. Although, naturally, 'great' is a common epithet of gods,[174] emphatic acclamations of greatness are exceptional in the classical period but abound in Hellenistic and Roman henotheistic ideology. In these periods "the desire to be magnified" (Eur. *Bacchae* 209), as we noted in the preceding section, is structurally reflected in endless 'magnifications', most emphatically documented in the curious confession inscriptions from North Eastern Lydia and the bordering area of Phrygia,[175] dating from the second and third centuries AD. Their frequent *exordium*: "Great is (the god) NN" is a ritualized acclamation. The ritual cheering was readily put into action as a propagandistic weapon in the struggle between pagans and Christians: "Great is the

---

Cf. Varro *apud* Aug. *CD* 4.22: "It is useless to know if Aesculapius is a god, if one does not know that he heals the sick, if one does not know why you should beseech him."

[171] *Syll.*[3] 1131, whose importance has been duly valued by A. Kiefer, *Aretalogische Studien* (Leipzig 1929) 21 f. and cf. Grandjean 1975, 1 ff.

[172] One fine example: *P.Oxy* 1382 (Totti 1985 no. 13) gives the title of a book "The Miracle (*aretê*) of Zeus Helios, great Sarapis, done to Syrion the Pilot." In the preceding passage a miracle is described whose final words are: "This miracle is recorded in the libraries of Mercurium. Do all of you who are present say: 'There is one Zeus Sarapis'."

[173] As demonstrated in the second chapter of *TER UNUS* and see above Ch. I, p. 140 f. A good second is Euripides' *Ion* 130 ff., and his *Hippolytos*.

[174] B. Müller, *Megas Theos* (Diss. Halle 1913); M. Bissinger, *Das Adjektiv megas in der griechischen Dichtung* (1966).

[175] Collected with a commentary by Petzl 1994. On the sovereignty of the gods: Pleket 1981, 171–183.

Artemis of the Ephesians" shouted the inhabitants of Ephesus during two full hours in a henotheistic attempt to stop an advancing monotheism. And the Christians never stopped yelling back.[176]

5. Cultic worship is the natural privilege of a god. Naturally, terms such as 'to serve' (*therapeuein*) occur in Greek religious texts of all periods. But the interpretation of such service as a personal submission or devotion to the god, even to the effect of being 'possessed' or 'enslaved' by the deity is definitely foreign to classical religiosity.[177] In classical literature a few passages in Euripides' tragedy the *Ion* come close to it, but here the protagonist was a temple slave, a position which may have influenced the terminology.[178] The scarce, though significant, testimonies in actual cult have been discussed in Chapter I.[179] On the other hand, structural symptoms of personal or collective surrender to a god, frequently in the form of sacred slavery, are rife in later periods. A fixed technical terminology indicates both the monk-like submission of, for example, the devotees of henotheistic Sarapis and the sovereignty of the local god holding sway over Maeonian villages,[180]

---

[176] In apocryphal Acts of Apostles the crowd generally exclaims "Great is the god of the Christians" (or "of Peter" or "of Paul"). On these and comparable Christian acclamations see: *TWNT* s.v. *megas, kurios*; V.H. Neufeld, *The Earliest Christian Confessions* (Leiden 1963) 51–68; Wengst 1967, 123–136. Consequently, the faithful adherent often underlines his inadequacy to describe the greatness of the god: "for it is within the reach of gods alone and not of mortals to describe the mighty deeds of the gods" says *P.Oxy* 1381, ll. 40 f., one of many examples of this expression. Totti 1985 no. 15. Cf. Grandjean 1975, 38–44.

[177] W.L. Westermann, The Freedmen and the Slaves of God, *PAPhS* 92 (1948) 56; K.H. Rengsdorff, *doulos, TWNT* II (1935) 267. For all relevant evidence and a fundamental discussion I refer to Pleket 1981. His discussion of the term *therapeia* as particularly relevant to the new type of religiosity (and perhaps derived from Oriental prototypes) is more recently corroborated by M.-F. Baslez, Entre traditions nationales et intégration: les associations sémitiques du monde grec, in: S. Ribichini, M. Rocchi & P. Xella (edd.), *La questione delle influenze vicino-orientali sulla religione greca* (Rome 2001) 235–247.

[178] Especially *Ion* 151 f.: "Oh, I would that my service to Apollo would never end…". Cf. Pleket 1981, 164 f. On the specific piety in the *Ion* see also: Yunis 1988, 121–138.

[179] As for instance the *nympholeptos* Archedamos from Thera who decorated a cave in Attica ca. 400 BC, as well as other servants of a god.

[180] On the terminology see especially P. Herrmann, Men, Herr von Axiotta. In: *Studien zur Religion und Kultur Kleinasiens. Festschrift F.K. Dörner* (Leiden 1978) 415–424; Pleket 1981, 162 f.; 177; Belayche 2006, 257–269. Cf. also the work of Chiai mentioned above n. 139. On the corresponding titulature of these gods e.g. 'master', 'lord' (κύριος, δεσπότης) see now also: T. Ritti, Antonino Pio 'padrone della terra e del mare', *Annali di Archeologia e di Storia Antica* 9/10 (2002/2003) 271–282. On the relationship of monotheism/henotheism and monarchy: A. Fürst, Monotheismus und Monarchie: zum Zusammenhang von Heil und Herrschaft in der Antike, *Theolo-*

whose inhabitants regarded their gods as monarchs and themselves as the slaves of the deity.

6. With the exception of a few isolated cases of ostentatious atheism,[181] the explicit refusal of worship is an unknown phenomenon in the archaic and classical periods.[182] In fact, the term 'faith' is of little avail in defining archaic and classical forms of belief, since the pantheon of the *polis* was as self-evident and unquestioned as the *polis* and her socio-cultural codes.[183] The refusal to believe in and, consequently, to honour a particular god—characteristics of the *theomachos* ('one who fights against god', e.g. in *Acts* 5:39)[184]—becomes a veritable *topos* in the legends of the expansion of the demanding and imperious Hellenistic gods and cults. "Let the unfaithful see, let them see

---

gie und Philosophie 81 (2006) 321–338. On the 'democratization' of the terminology: E.W. Dickie, Κύριε, δέσποτα, *domine*. Greek Politeness in the Roman Empire, *JHS* 121 (2001) 1–11.

[181] M. Winiarczyk, Wer galt im Altertum als Atheist? *Philologus* 128 (1984) 157–183, provides a full list of ancient 'atheists'.

[182] "Il n'y a pas de place, dans ce système, pour le personnage du renonçant", says J.-P. Vernant, *L'individu, la mort, l'amour: Soi-même et l'autre en Grèce ancienne* (Paris 1989) 213, speaking of the inclusive cultic world of fifth century Athens. Challenge directed to the gods as expressed in the myths of Tantalos, Niobe, Arachne and Marsyas are of a decidedly different nature and allude to the sin of *hybris* and its consequences rather than to lack of belief *in the existence* of the god. Cf. W. Nestle, Legenden vom Tod der Gottesverächter, *ARW* 33 (1936) 246–269; Chr. Sourvinou-Inwood, Crime and Punishment: Tityos, Tantalos and Sisyphos in *Odyssey* 11, *BICS* 33 (1986) 37–58.

[183] This has long been recognized as one of the most characteristic distinctions between the religion of the classical *polis* and the confession creeds in Hellenistic and later periods. Although J. Kinneavy, *Greek Rhetorical Origins of Christian Faith* (Oxford 1988) has argued that the concept of *pistis* was rooted in classical rhetoric, faith as a conscious choice and involving acts of conversion is, as was powerfully argued by Nock 1933, practically restricted to heno- and monotheistic creeds. (On conversion see most recently: C.B. Kendall, O. Nicholson, W.D. Phillips, Jr., & M. Ragnow [edd.], *Conversion to Christianity from Late Antiquity to the Modern Age: Considering the Process in Europe, Asia, and the America* [Minnesota Studies in Early Modern History, Minneapolis 2009]). There is a significant Epidaurian inscription (no. 3 Herzog) in which a person who mocks the *iamata* ('healings') of Asklepios is punished for his *apistia* by an illness which is only cured after his 'conversion'. Henceforth his name will be Apistos. In no. 4 Asklepios orders an unbeliever to sacrifice a silver sow as a "testimony of her stupidity." This is the same terminology and ideology as we see in the confession texts of the second centuries AD. In *TAM* V, 1, 179b, a person is punished διὰ τὸ ἀπιστῖν ('because of his disbelief'). On the idea of *pistis* in the New Testament see: Chr.D. Marshall, *Faith as a Theme in Mark's Narrative* (Cambridge 1989). All this by no means implies that the term and notion of 'belief' should have no bearing on classical Greek or Roman religion: see Appendix IV.

[184] The term may have been borrowed from the *Bacchae* of Euripides. Cf. J.R.C. Cousland, Dionysus "theomachos"? *Biblica* 82 (2001) 539–548.

and recognize their error" (*videant irreligiosi, videant et errorem suum recognoscant*), says the Isis priest after Lucius' miraculous recovery in Apul. *Metam.* 11.15.[185] The Maeonian confession inscriptions, where trespasses against gods or humans are preferably explained as tokens of deficient faith and therefore as contempt of the god, often end with the formula: "I warn all mankind not to hold the god in contempt, for they shall have this *stele* as an admonition." Apparently, the theme of the impious unbeliever becomes relevant only when it concerns either a god who still has to conquer a place in the cult, or one whose claims are substantially higher than those of the ancient gods of the *polis*, whose cult formed an unquestioned part of *polis* tradition. In these cases the words of a Sarapis devotee apply: "for a mortal cannot contradict Lord Sarapis."[186]

7. Any attempt to match oneself against a god is a fatal folly. Gods are invincible and the human rebel is doomed to get the worst of it. Characteristically, this theme, though not unknown (Tantalus, Sisyphos etc.), was not exploited for propagandistic ends in classical times. In that period it was deemed superfluous to substantiate the invincibility of a god. Conversely, the epithet 'invincible' (Gr. *anikêtos*, Lat. *invictus*) became very popular in the Hellenistic and Roman periods,[187] particularly in the competition between various henotheistic movements in imperial times: 'Sarapis overcomes'[188] is a common variant of the acclamations 'Great' or 'One (is) Sarapis'. The futility of resisting a god and the divine triumph over atheists or sinners is a *topos* in the Maeonian confession texts and related genres,[189] where, as we have

---

[185] Cf. *P.Oxy* 1381 (Totti 1985 no. 15) ll. 204 f., after an incitement to propagate the faith in Imouthes Asclepius (following a miraculous cure) the pious are welcomed, whereas conversely: "Go hence, o envious and impious." Vettius Valens 9 pr., p. 331, 12, hopes that his exposition will convince the ἀμαθεῖς καὶ θεομάχοι ('ignorants and fighters against god'). See for more interesting examples: Norden 1923, 6 ff., 134 ff.; Nock 1933, 4; 88; Gwyn Griffiths *ad* Apul. *Metam.* 11.15. Cf. above n. 183.

[186] *P.Michigan* inv. 4686. Ed. H.C. Youtie & J.G. Winter, *P.Mich.* 8, 511; Totti 1985 no. 49.

[187] The evidence in S. Weinstock, Victor and Invictus, *HThR* 50 (1957) 211–247; *idem, RE* VIII A2 (1958) 2485–2500 and 2501–2542, s.v. 'victor' and 'victoria'.

[188] Weinreich 1969, I, 426 ff.; 438 ff., also on the Christian response; Peterson 1926, 152–163. Cf. H. Engelmann, *The Delian Aretalogy of Sarapis* (Leiden 1975) 24, where, in l. 27, the god says to his priest: "We shall win."

[189] A very important related text is the well-known sacred law of a cult group round the goddess Agdistis at Philadelphia in Lydia (*LSAM* 20, 2nd/1st century BC). After the basic discussion by O. Weinreich, *SbHeidelberg* 1919, there is a good treatment by S.C. Barton & G.H.R. Horsley, A Hellenistic Cult Group and the New Testament

seen, the consequences of human resistance have the function of an 'admonition' or 'testimony'.

8. *Theomachoi* are severely punished. Both in myth and legend—but only rarely in history—we find above all blindness and madness,[190] besides other kinds of illnesses and afflictions, as specific expressions of divine wrath.[191] Historically, however, the punishment of mortals who resist (the coming of) a god does not become topical until the Hellenistic and imperial periods.[192] The forerunners, as we saw, are discernable in some Epidaurian inscriptions praising the god Asklepios[193] and we have seen examples in the resistance legends around Sarapis, especially the Delian aretalogy, in which the adversaries of the god are "like statues struck by the god" and cannot utter a sound. Saul, who was (temporarily) blinded, is structurally to be equated with Apuleius' Lucius who became a donkey. The punishments are explicitly referred to as demonstrations of the powerfulness of the particular god in question. Divine triumph or punishment is called "worthy of his power or majesty" in various texts.[194] Whoever wishes to be convinced

---

Churches, *JbAC* 24 (1981) 7–41. In line 31 ff. we read that a man or woman who are guilty of aforementioned acts shall not enter the *oikos* in which the cult is celebrated: "for great are the gods set up in it, they watch over these things and will not tolerate those who transgress the ordinances" and in ll. 50 ff.: "they shall hate such people and inflict upon them great punishments."

[190] Full documentation in: *TER UNUS* 202. On illnesses in confession texts: Chaniotis, 1995, 323–344. Cf. also next note.

[191] W. Speyer, Fluch, *RAC* 7 (1969) 1179 f.; 1112 ff.; *idem,* Gottesfeind, *RAC* 11 (1981) 996–1043, espec. 1017 ff.; 1025 f.; 1037 ff.; *idem*, Zorn der Gottheit, Vergeltung und Sühne, in: U. Mann (ed.), *Theologie und Religionswissenschaft* (Darmstadt 1973), *passim*; B.W. Vickers, *Towards Greek Tragedy* (London 1973) 252–255; L. Robert, *Hellenica* XI–XII, 439. In Christian context: E. Heck, *Mê theomachein oder: Die Bestrafung des Gottesverächters. Untersuchungen zu Bekämpfung und Aneignung römischer Religio bei Tertullian, Cyprian und Lactanz* (Frankfurt 1987). The numerous oracles concerning personal or epidemic diseases and afflictions attributed to divine anger generally pertain to trespasses against religious or ritual rules, and are especially concerned with purity. Cf. particularly the subtle discussion by Parker 1983, 235–256, and Chaniotis 1997b.

[192] It is significant that Weinreich 1909, s.v. "Strafwunder", besides some well-known mythical and legendary miracles (especially the ones performed by images of heroes, as e.g. the famous case of Theagenes, and the instances from Epidaurus mentioned above), takes his entire evidence from Hellenistic and above all Roman times. Parker 1983 stresses the fatalistic views on illness etc. in the archaic period and for the classical period draws our attention to the complex attitudes to divine (though often amoral) and natural causation in cases of illness.

[193] See above n. 183 and cf. Weinreich 1909, 88.

[194] Delian Sarapis aretalogy l. 27/8. In a bronze tablet from Asia Minor, the Mother of the Gods is requested to "punish [some unknown thieves] in a way worthy of her

of the ubiquity of punitive miracles in Hellenistic and imperial times will find rich evidence in such sources as the collections of Maeonian confession texts and in Lactantius *De mortibus persecutorum*.[195] A recently found dedication from a sanctuary of Mes (= the god Men) somewhere in Lydia[196] combines the elements listed under nos. 7 and 8 here by praising the god with the words: "Great is your justice! Great is your victory! Great your punishing power!"

9. Public confession of guilt towards the god, either as a token of reverence or as an instrument of propaganda or both, is not found in our sources before the 4th century miracle records from Epidaurus.[197] In this collection there are three instances of people who confess their mistakes and subsequently are healed by the god.[198] These scattered and incidental instances are the first hesitant signs of a mentality which in its institutionalized form and with much greater rigidity became particularly typical of (though by no means restricted to) the Maeonian confession texts, who took their name from it.[199] These texts, which are

---

power". A Latin curse tablet from Belo (Spain) asks the goddess: *fac tuo numini maestati exemplaria*. A variant expression on a Delian lead tablet, where the Syrian gods are implored to "punish and give expression to your wondrous power": Ph. Bruneau, *Recherches sur les cultes de Délos à l'époque hellénistique et à l'époque impériale* (Paris 1970) 650 ff. A prayer of revenge asks for retaliation "that I may see your power": G. Björck, *Der Fluch des Christen Sabinus* (*Papyrus Upsaliensis* 8) (Uppsala 1938) p. 46 no. 24; another asks "let the evildoers be pursued… Lord, quickly show them your might" (Björck 6). On these expressions and the concomitant nature of 'prayers for justice' see: Versnel 1991 and 2009.

[195] See generally Weinreich 1909.

[196] H. Malay, A Praise on Men Artemidorou Axiottenos, *EA* 36 (2003), 13–18 (*SEG* 53, 1344; AD. 57). Discussion: A. Chaniotis, Ritual Performances of Divine Justice: The Epigraphy of Confession, Atonement, and Exaltation in Roman Asia Minor, in: H. Cotton *et alii* (edd.), *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East* (Cambridge 2009) 118 -125, 140 ff.; cf. *idem* 2010, 122 f.

[197] R. Pettazzoni, Confession of Sins and the Classics, *HThR* 30 (1937) 7 ff., mentions Menander fr. 544 K (Porphyr. *De abst*. IV, 15) on the followers of the Dea Syria as the first *literary* record of public confession of sins. Cf. S. Eitrem, Kultsünden und Gottesverleugner, *SMSR* 13 (1937) 244 f.; MacMullen 1981, 32.

[198] They are discussed by F. Kudlien, Beichte und Heilung, *Medizinhistorisches Journal* 13 (1978) 1–14, espec. 5 f. Cf. above n. 183.

[199] I follow here the argument of Pleket 1981, 180 and n. 135. On confession of sins in antiquity see the fundamental work of R. Pettazzoni, *La confessione dei peccati*, especially III, 2 (Bologna 1936). The confession inscriptions in: Petzl 1994. Outside the Lydian-Phrygian inscriptions the practice of public confession is particularly prominent in the religion of the Egyptian gods and of the Dea Syria. See for example Ovid *Ex Ponto* 1.1.51 ff., who states: *talia caelestes fieri praeconia gaudent ut sua quid valeant numina teste probent* ("The gods rejoice in such heraldings that witnesses may attest their power"). This mentality is also apparent in Jewish literature. Afflicted by a horrible

essentially concise aretalogies and accordingly frequently begin with a *megas* acclamation, offer reasons for their own inscription: as a rule an offence against a god or human being; next the punishment by the god, mostly in the form of illness or even death; the public confession of the lapse, sometimes followed by an act of divine mercy, for instance the recovery from illness; and finally the formulary recognition of the divine majesty: "and from now on I praise the god" or, in Phrygian texts, the formula of warning quoted above.

4. *The nature of oneness in henotheistic religion*

Altogether, our enquiry into the nature of henotheistic religiosity has revealed one central message: the god involved is superior, uniquely great, towering above other gods. The divine superiority manifests itself in two ways, first, as an unrestricted capacity to perform matchless miracles and creative acts—'to do anything (s)he wants' (so particularly in the aretalogies)—and secondly, as a status of absolute and autocratic authority over world and cosmos: 'controlling everything that is'. With this we are ready to turn our attention from the themes of 'greatness' and 'superiority' to the more specific aspect of 'oneness' as most patently obvious in the acclamation *heis ho theos* ('one is the god'). As I mentioned earlier, it is easier to determine what the expression does not mean than exactly what it does. Everybody agrees that this type of oneness cannot be simply equated with monotheism (once more leaving aside the question whether pure monotheism ever existed in any ancient civilization). As is immediately apparent from various hymnic texts where Isis may be accompanied by Sarapis, by Osiris and many other gods, the deity who is acclaimed as *heis* is not (necessarily) *monos* in the sense of 'the only god that exists'.[200] But by thus putting the problem, we already run the risk of distorting the *Greek* term *monos* in applying *our* concept of 'monotheism'.[201] In fact, the term *monos* is by no means absent from these praises and, indeed,

---

disease Antiochus IV promises that, if the God of the Jews will deliver him from his pains, he will visit every inhabited place to proclaim God's might (2 Macc. 9:17).

[200] Very illustrative is also the oath of the mystes in the Isis mysteries as cited above Ch. I n. 410. Isis may be lauded as the unique *pantokrateira* and within this perspective she may unite the other great gods in a syncretistic 'one and all' construction. But as soon as one abandons this focus the other, lesser, gods are back on the retina and smoothly function side by side with the one and only.

[201] Generally on the risks of using terms such as monotheism in the context of the present issue Belayche 2010, 142–147, and see above p. 288 f.

we already encountered it in an Isis aretalogy. What is more, it is a common term in hymnody in general and especially current in hymns for henotheistic gods. A glance at its functions will advance our insight into the connotations of its twin-term *heis*, which, being more restricted to an acclamative function, does not prominently occur in hymns. On the other hand Latin *unus* does, and, henotheism being a phenomenon that spread far and wide in the Roman empire, we shall from now on indiscriminately rely on both Latin and Greek material.[202]

A quick perusal of a few aretalogies, hymns and other panegyrical texts reveals that terms like (Greek) *monos* and (Lat.) *unus, solus,* may have two different functions,[203] although they cannot always be clearly distinguished. The first is the function apparent in such acclamations as: "you alone are able to do this (*tu sola potes*)", or "you alone have the power over a certain domain," e.g. "Hail, Roma, …. to you alone, o most venerable, the Moirai granted fame …"[204] or in the claim we already met: "I, Isis, am the *one and only* sovereign of this era". In these formulas, which belong to the most popular hymnic devices, those qualities of the revered god that make him *exceptional* are emphasized. (S)he is the only one who can do things that all others cannot or the only one who rules over the world, which does not imply that (s)he is the only existing god(dess). Likewise Hellenistic rulers could claim that they were the 'great' or the 'only' king, although they were perfectly aware of the irritating existence of plenty of competitive colleagues around.[205]

In this sense, Greek *monos* and Latin *solus* have a contrastive and elative force pertaining to quality, not an ontologically exclusive or all-embracing one. As a translation the term 'unique(ly)' comes closest. In the same sense the terms are also very frequent in elative formulas for famous mortals: generals, emperors, athletes, etc., both in Greece and Rome. This, then, seems to be the dominant meaning that both Greek

---

[202] In what follows I summarize my findings as expounded in the third chapter of *TER UNUS*.

[203] On this difference cf. Nock 1972 I, 39 f. and Nock-Festugière 1972 I, 57. Weinreich 1969 I, 434, too, distinguishes between henotheistic and 'elative' functions.

[204] Lucretius 1, 31, and *Hymn of Melinno to Rome. Stob. Flor*. 1 p. 312 (H) respectively; cf. Norden 1923, 160.

[205] As, in the mid-second century B.C., the Graeco-Bactrian king Euthydemos was designated in an epigram (*SEG* 54.1596), which possibly reflects acclamations such as 'the greatest of all kings.' See: G. Rougemont, Dédicace d'Héliodotos à Hestia pour le salut d'Euthydème et de Démétrios, *JdS* (2004), 333–337, as mentioned by Chaniotis 2010, 130.

heis or *monos* and Latin *unus* or *solus* have in the hundreds of acclamations and invocations, most emphatically in the *heis theos* cheers.[206] One of the arguments for this specific meaning is that acclamations with *heis, monos* and *prôtos,* and various combinations of these terms are specifically frequent in the agonistic sphere.[207] Very popular was εἷς ἀπ' αἰῶνος or πρῶτος καὶ μόνος ἀπ' αἰῶνος, which according to Tertullian, *De spect*. 25, was the usual cheer at games and contests.[208] Most probably this means something like "the uniquely first since all eternity" or more colloquially: "we have never seen such a miraculous star." Similar acclamations existed in Latin.[209]

Less obvious is the intended meaning of the notoriously enigmatic bi-, tri-, and quadripartite acclamations (all from the second and third centuries AD) such as: *heis Zeus Serapis*, or *heis Zeus Serapis Asklepios Soter*, or *heis Zeus Mitras Helios*. Peterson has devoted a thorough investigation to the entire complex. He postulated a Chaldaean astrological origin, which came into its own in later solar theology.[210] Sup-

---

[206] Wengst 1967, 128 ff. gives the Christian evidence for *heis* and *monos* as indications for the unicity of God as god and especially as creator. It is a "Terminus Technicus der frühchristlichen Heidenmission" and no doubt originated as an anti-acclamation against the pre-existent pagan *heis theos* acclamations. There is also a good brief survey of the pagan evidence. However, even in the NT the terms offer no warrant of a pure monotheism. See above n. 8 and n. 144.

[207] Collected and discussed by M.N. Tod, Greek Record-keeping and Record-breaking, *CQ* 43 (1949) 106–112, espec. 111 f. More recently J.H. Neyrey, "First", "Only", "One of a Few", and "No One Else": The Rhetoric of Uniqueness and the Doxologies in 1 Timothy, *Biblica* 86 (2005) 59–87 (= Neyrey 2007, 112–143), unaware of the current discussion on the issue (the notion *heis* including the entire relevant literature is conspicuously absent in his paper), discusses comparable NT (and OT) expressions of praise based on the "principle of incomparability." He adduces interesting samples taken from ancient theoreticians of Greek rhetoric from Aristotle to Quintilian who developed a rhetorical theory of "uniqueness."

[208] This text has been amply discussed by L. Robert, *Études épigraphiques et philologiques* (Paris 1938) 108–111, who several times returns to these acclamations: *Hellenica* X, 61; XIII, 216; Les épigrammes satiriques de Lucillius sur les athlètes: parodie et réalités, in: *L'épigramme grecque* (Entretiens Hardt XIV [Genéve 1967]) 275 f.

[209] S. Mrozek, *Primus omnium* sur les inscriptions des municipes italiens, *Epigraphica* 33 (1971) 60–69, discusses some Latin expressions, without realizing, or so it seems, that they go back to Hellenistic Greek prototypes. Cf. *sui temporis primus et solus factionarius* in an inscription from 275 AD (*CIL* VI, 10060). Martial 8, 66, 6, has: *rerum prima salus et una, Caesar*.

[210] Peterson 1926, 227–256. See most recently: W. Fauth, *Helios Megistos. Zur synkretistischen Theologie der Spätantike* (Leiden 1995) 74–77; L. Bricault, Zeus Hélios Mégas Sarapis, in: *Michel Malaise* in honorem, *Acta Orientalia Belgica* 18 (Bruxelles 2005) 243–254.

ported by an abundance of data[211] Peterson argued that they are *not* syncretistic confessions expressing the unity or identity of the gods mentioned. On the contrary, he claims, they are acclamations emphasizing the exceptional character and greatness of the god or gods invoked. In other words, just as single *heis theos*, they represent the elative, not the unifying force of the word *heis*.[212] On the other hand, it is hard to avoid the impression that with the extension of the formula to several names of gods the unifying-henotheistic element gradually increased at the cost of the acclamatory-elative component. After all, the various gods mentioned in these formulas did undergo a rapid and profound process of syncretism in late antiquity. However, the difference is not always easy to trace and perhaps it is not such a good idea to expect—and hence search for—precise semantic distinctions.

In this connection we should bear in mind that acclamations typically belong to what in sociolinguistics is called 'phatic' or 'expressive' language, a form of communication which, in opposition to descriptive expression, does not normally bear a precise and well-defined meaning. What did Israelites *and* Greeks *and* Romans mean when they wished that their kings and emperors 'may live for ever or in eternity, as Caracalla (*SEG* 48.1961 f., 1964 f.)', or what the Chinese, with their slogan—hardly an offspring from a Mediterranean tradition—'May Chairman Mao live for ever'? The fact that *heis* may refer either to hierarchy ('the first', 'unique') or to ontology ('the only one that *is*' or 'the one that is all') makes the term eminently liable to manipulation and ambiguous application. We should at least consider the possibility that these cheers did not have any precise 'intended meaning' at all, but expressed only a vague notion of magnification. It is only when the shouter comes to reflect on what he is shouting—but how many

[211] For instance a graffito adduced by Peterson 230: "one is Zeus Sarapis, great is Isis the Lady" (εἷς Ζεὺς Σάραπις, μεγάλη ἡ Ἶσις ἡ κυρία), which suffices to show how the term *heis* defies any narrow monolithic 'translation'. "Es geht hier nicht um eine begriffliche Definition, sondern um eine Hoheitsaussage" (*ibid.* p. 132). See now also Belayche 2010.

[212] L. Robert, *Opera minora selecta* (Amsterdam 1969) I 427 n. 101, in this connection speaks of "le caractère de superlatif de l'acclamation *heis théos*." With Peterson he contests Cumont's interpretation 'dieu unique'. It is rather 'dieu suprême' and there is an "équivalence pratique entre *heis* et *megas*." As opposed to French 'unique', the English word 'unique' like Dutch 'enig' combines the two notions that can be distinguished as the superlative and the 'exclusive'. The same is true of the Latin *unicus*. On which see *TER UNUS* pp. 235, 249.

ever did (or do)?—that the construction of distinct (and divergent) meanings can commence.

This brings us to the second of the two different functions announced above. An inscription from Capua hails Isis as: *te tibi una quae es omnia* ('you who alone art all').[213] If we translate Latin *unus/una* into its Greek equivalent *heis/mia*, this expression closely resembles the one introduced by Xenophanes as discussed in the first section of this chapter, and even more its later offspring in the all-embracing Stoic and Neo-Platonic claims that their god was 'one and all' (Gr. ἓν καὶ πᾶν, Lat. *solus omnia*). But if we now ask if this similarity implies equality, the answer must be negative, at least for the henotheistic theology of the Hellenistic period. For 'one and all' here appears to have a very special frame of reference, as expressed in an exemplary way in a hymn of Isidorus 1.23 where it is said: "that you alone (*mounê*) are all other goddesses who are named by the nations."

This is as close as Hellenistic henotheism ever got to monotheism. Isis is here represented as alone embodying all the other goddesses. Further elaborations include long geographical lists of all the superior gods of each region who are there invoked by their local names but who are now unmasked as just another representation of the one and only henotheistic god.[214] This is a typical product of theological reflection. However, that theological reflection is not always the most reliable refuge in religious matters becomes apparent from the inevitable limitations inherent in this particular trope. First, henotheism is fatally gender-specific: the many different representations of Isis are inevitably all female. This irritating obstacle on the road to real monotheism is revealingly illustrated by the creative solution contrived by a hymnodist who could not choose between Isis and Sarapis: "You are *two*, but you are called *many* among the nations. In fact, life knows you *alone* (μόνους) as gods."[215] Furthermore, this construction by no

[213] *CIL* X, 3800; *ILS* 4362; *SIRIS* 502. Cf. V. Tran Tam Tinh, *Le culte des divinités orientales en Campanie* (Leiden 1972) 77 and 199–234; Grandjean 1975, 69 ff.

[214] Hence her inclusive Greek epithet 'Myrionyma' ('with innumerable names') is so stereotyped that it occurs both in literary texts (for instance in the *Life of Aesopus* 5 = Totti 1985, no. 18) and even in Latin inscriptions (*CIL* III, 882 and 4017; *SIRIS* 656; *CIL* V, 5080, *CIL* XIII, 3461; *ILS* 4376a; *SIRIS* 749). Turcan 1989 entitles his chapter on the goddess: 'Isis Myrionyme.' Cf. above n. 169 and Ch. I n. 122. For an exhaustive collection of epithets in demotic hymns to Isis see: H. Kockelmann *o.c.* (above n. 153).

[215] *Hymn of Maronea* ll. 19–20.

means implies that all lesser gods are ousted by this syncretistic operation. It is only the great national goddesses that are identified with Isis. Apparently the message is: Isis is the greatest goddess; consequently every other *great* goddess can only be an alias of this central deity. Those readers, finally, who find it hard to come to terms with the inevitable inconsistencies implied in the variety of connotations of the four letter word *heis*, may find some solace in Walt Whitman's famous lines in his *Song to myself*, 51: "Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself (I am large, I contain multitudes)."

5. *Questions of origin*

Much of what has been demonstrated in this section is strongly reminiscent of creeds and cultic practices of Egypt and the ancient Near East. Time and again characteristic elements of aretalogies could be traced back to non-Greek models[216] and there is not one of the nine characteristics listed above that could not be readily typified as a structural phenomenon of Near Eastern religiosity rather than of archaic and classical Greek religion. Accordingly, most of them do not come well into view before the Hellenistic era, to reach their bloom only in Imperial times, especially in the 2nd/3d centuries AD. The same is true for the acclamation *heis*. There is only one pre-hellenistic testimony of this acclamation, viz. in a Gurob papyrus,[217] which has preserved a fragment of what may have been an Orphic book. It contains an

[216] Not only Egyptian ones: A. Jeremias, *Monotheistische Strömungen innerhalb der babylonischen Religion* (Leipzig 1904), W. von Soden in: *Sumerische und Akkadische Hymnen und Gebete* (Zürich 1953) espec. 50; 254; 258 f.; 301 f.; 395 f., and B.R. Foster, *Before the Muses* (Bethesda Maryland 1996[2]) 608; 619; 598; 699 ff.; 704 ff., mention several Mesopotamian hymns with 'all gods in one" and other monotheizing characteristics. Cf. B. Hartmann, Monotheistische stromingen in de Babylonische godsdienst, *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 20 (1965–6) 328–338; the contributions of B. Porter and S. Parpola in Porter 2000.

[217] *P.Gurob* 1,23; O. Kern, *Orphicorum Fragmenta* (Berlin 1922) 31; R.A. Pack, *The Greek and Latin Literary Texts from Greco-Roman Egypt* (1965[2]) 2464. For recent discussion see: S.I. Johnston & T.J. McNiven, Dionysus and the Underworld in Toledo, *MH* 53 (1996) 25–36; F. Graf & S.I. Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife: Orpheus and the Bacchic Gold Tablets* (London-New York 2007) 150–155, with a translation of the text at 188 f. The authors seem to doubt the reading "one" but do not give their arguments, in fact do not mention the word in their discussion. J. Hordern, Notes on the Orphic Papyrus of Gurob, *ZPE* 129 (2000) 131–140, provides a meticulous discussion of the text and notes (134): "the final prose section begins with the statement 'one Dionysus' (……) but it is difficult to insert the phrase into the hexameters here," referring to M.L. West, *The Orphic Poems* (Oxford 1983) 253.

invocation of the *Kouretes* and the password: *heis Dionusos*.[218] The papyrus is from the third century BC, but the text itself should be attributed to the fourth century at least. So, as far as we can see, Dionysos was the first god to be hailed with an acclamation that became the most characteristic identification of the great gods of later times. The problem, however, is that we have no idea about the cultural identity of the acclamation, although the text itself betrays unmistakably Orphic features. Did it originate in Greece or with a local cult group in Egypt, influenced by Egyptian conceptions? In this context it may be of interest that the first time that we see the acclamation addressed to a human—albeit semi-deified—person is in the acclamation "one like Pythios (Apollo)," addressed to the emperor Nero (Cass. Dio 61, 20, 5; cf. 63, 20, 5).[219]

The term *heis* as an elative praise is not attested in classical Greece, but *monos* and *prôtos kai monos* were so ubiquitous that they are cherished material for puns in the Attic comedy and elsewhere.[220] Altogether, I consider it most likely that the acclamation *heis* originated as a translation of the Egyptian word for 'one' and that there was a cross-fertilization with an ideology that was already *in statu nascendi* elsewhere in the Hellenistic Mediterraneum. The expressions we have seen earlier—Isis as τὴν μίαν (the one) or as "you who alone (μούνη) are all other goddesses who are named by the nations," while Apuleius *Metam.* 11.4 speaks of her *nomen unicum*—may well betray the Egyptian Isis-name Thiouis 'the one'.[221] However, all this does not alter the fact that it is easier, more rewarding and more relevant to draw

---

[218] That it is a password may be inferred from the word immediately following the acclamation: εἷς Διόνυσος σύμβολα.

[219] In *TER UNUS* I wondered: "Did Nero's special Alexandrian 'claqueurs' (Suet. *Nero* 20) introduce this agonistic acclamation from Egypt?" However, the recent find of very specific and interesting Delphic acclamations εἷς Ἀπόλλων Πύθιος in graffiti of Pythian victors (late 2nd and 3d c. AD), favours a more direct relationship with the Pythian games. See: F. Queyrel, Inscriptions et scènes figurées peintes sur le mur de fond du xyste de Delphes, *BCH* 125 (2001), 333–387, and the discussion in Chaniotis 2010, 126 f. with the main texts in n. 60. One may wonder whether there is a connection with the speculations of Ammonios and Plutarch (Plut. *De E Delph.* espec. 393B; 388F) on the Delphic E and the Apollonian name Ièios denoting εἷς καὶ μόνος. See: R. Hirsch-Luipold, Der eine Gott bei Philon von Alexandrien und Plutarch, in: *idem* (ed.), *Gott und die Götter bei Plutarch* (Berlin-New York 2005) 141–167.

[220] Testimonia in *TER UNUS* 248.

[221] Vanderlip 1972, 31; Grandjean 1975, 70 f.; Gwyn Griffiths 1975, 145. On the general diffusion of this expression among Egyptian and Near Eastern civilizations: C.H. Gordon, His Name is 'One', *JNES* 29 (1970) 198 ff.

a list of characteristics of henotheistic religiosity, as we have done, then to precisely analyse and describe what exactly *heis* is supposed to mean. In fact, the only way to discover the meaning, or rather the implications and connotations, of the word *heis* is by adducing a collection of henotheistic features.

And it is exactly by this course of action that we may justify the presence of this section in a chapter on *Greek* experiments in oneness. If the semantic roots of the verbal element *heis* must be sought in non-Greek religions, this does not mean that Greek culture has not contributed to the creation of both the phenomenological characteristics of, and the religious mentality inherent in the notion of henotheism, as we analysed them in the present section. One may for instance call to mind the popularity of the classical Greek *monos* acclamations and, more important, the fact that the earliest relevant henotheistic testimonies have all come to us in Greek texts whose *Sitz im Leben* can be traced back to Greek speaking areas. The aretalogies that we discussed display genuine Greek tropes and ideas side by side with, for instance, Egyptian ones. More generally, a culture's readiness to accommodate foreign incentives is not a passive but an active drive which may be credited to its own active involvement in cultural change and development.

Far more important, however, is that, as we have observed in our first chapter, unmistakable signs of a new henotheistic religiosity became apparent elsewhere in Greece (e.g. the Asclepius cult at Epidauros) but above all in Athens from the late fifth century onwards. New gods were introduced and claimed a more personal devotion and exclusive type of worship then the old gods ever enjoyed. As a matter of fact these new creeds displayed a type of religiosity that closely resembles and in fact forms a prelude to the henotheistic trends of the Hellenistic and Imperial periods, as we saw in Chapter I pp. 138–140.

6. *Concluding remarks*

What, then, *is* the overall message of our source material? This: that the lauded god is greater, more powerful than, hence absolutely superior to all other gods. In fact, henotheistic deities are *competing for omnipotence*.[222] In this respect (and many other) they have adopted

[222] It is exactly the elements of competition in henotheistic ideology and their political and social background that are in the centre of interest in the recent studies of Belayche 2010 and especially of Chaniotis 2010.

traits of Hellenistic kingship and accordingly manifest themselves as autocratic rulers to whom a mortal could only respond with an attitude of humble subservience or even slavery. This went hand in hand with the appearance of new forms of a more intense and personal relationship between god and man, sometimes accompanied by experiences and expressions of sin, guilt, confession, and mercy. In this context in particular we encounter claims that the god is 'great', indeed greater than other gods. (S)he is 'unique' and outshines all other deities by her/his greatness.

Though most of the elements analysed above can already be found sporadically in earlier periods, their amalgamation into one structural complex is specifically characteristic of the religious mentality that we have been discussing. Hymns, including those of the archaic and classical periods of Greece, are praises of a god. By definition they concentrate on one particular deity and magnify his greatness. Hence we have called them henotheistic moments in an otherwise polytheistic context. However, even allowing for its precursors in fourth-century Greece, henotheism never developed into a structural religious, let alone cultic, phenomenon before the Hellenistic period. Mythically speaking, Zeus was superior to all other Greek gods, as is most emphatically expressed in the unique aretalogical formula of omnipotence at the beginning of Hesiod's *Works and Days*.[223] However, this had no cultic consequences whatever. In classical times, outside the sphere of philosophical monotheism,[224] a permanent exclusive devotion to one god was confined to small cult groups and religious devotees in the margin of society. The dogmatic elevation of one god above all others and the concomitant *affective* exclusion of other gods are features typical of Hellenistic and later religiosity. All this is expressed in the acclamation *heis (ho) theos*.

5. Conclusion

Three experiments in oneness. The first two represent cosmologies 'to live by'[225] and can be understood as explanatory devices, an individual one to define why things—world, kosmos, God—are as they are, and

[223] Cf. above p. 231 and below p. 422.
[224] C. Ramnoux, Sur un monothéisme grec, *RPhL* 82 (1984) 175–198.
[225] Geertz 1973, 118.

a collective one to help imagine and cope with the mechanisms that make things happen as they happen. These 'One Gods', being products of at least speculative, at times intellectual, and at best philosophical reflection, are more or less abstract principles that transcend both men and traditional gods. They establish a conceptual unity, but a unity that is not the sum of the plurality of the normal gods. In both experiments the One and the Many operate on different levels and have different tasks, preserving a complementary co-existence. After all, insight into the divine *arche* of the kosmos or into the supernatural strand of causation does not neutralize human anxiety and concern nor reduce the desire to positively influence and control the future. To *explain* the inexorable, divinity must be depersonalized: both the One god and 'the gods' are nameless and not conceived as an approachable personal authority. If at all receiving worship in terms of libation and prayer, as did the Xenophanean One god, this was a formal expression of detached deference and submission, not being launched as a personal appeal in situations of disaster. 'The gods' as a comprehensive notion were, with few exceptions, devoid of cult. The traditional personal gods, on the other hand, derived their very identity from their cultic existence, including sacrifice and prayer, and from iconography and myth. Though belonging to the same polythetic class of 'gods' the One and the Many are separate categories. In this respect they are incomparable, hence do not compete.

Contrarily, the third experiment concerns One god who shares *all* characteristics with the traditional gods, including name, cult and myth. In fact (s)he *is* a traditional god, but one who has risen to such sublime eminence, that (s)he becomes different. The difference between this One and the Many, however, is not one in quality, but in status. In origin not being the product of intellectual speculation, this One god is the focus of appeal and supplication. In order to *mollify* the inexorable, it must be personalized. Accordingly, the Hellenistic One God is personal and very much a projection of a social/political reality: the king. The human worshipper is, first and foremost, dependent, dependence being another manner of creating sense out of chaos.[226] In this conception, then, all gods belong to one and the same category.

[226] Burkert 1996a, 84, quoting D. Morris, *The Naked Ape: A Zoologist's Study of the Human Animal* (New York 1967) 180: "fundamental biological tendency…to submit ourselves to an all-powerful, dominant member of the group." Cf. the central role of dependency in expressions of private piety in Chapter I, pp. 128 f.

Not only are they comparable, they *are* continuously *being* compared and constantly involved in a competition for pride of place. Instead of One as opposed to the Many, there are several competing Ones among the Many. An occasional syncretistic identification of the Many with the One is the ultimate venture in the Hellenistic quest for unity in diversity.

None of the three Ones discussed in this chapter ousted or absorbed the Many. The first two, being so different, did not need to endeavour to, the third One, though not averse, did not succeed. One may well wonder if any god ever succeeds.[227] The above analysis is an attempt at historical interpretation, not a dogmatic treatise. The three experiments are no impenetrable isolated systems and especially in religion borders are there to be crossed. One may try to personalize the anonymous First Principle by calling it Zeus, as we have seen. Tyche experienced a similar manipulation. As the fearsome impersonal principle of arbitrariness she was 'overcome' by Isis; as the powerful personified protector of good Fortune she was identified with the Egyptian goddess. Tyche never lost her ambiguous position on the brink between principle and person. In late antiquity, God and Christ were worshipped in hymns that extolled their qualities to such a degree that these Ones risked being reduced to a "Denk-, Seh-, Hör-, und Intelligenz*monstrum*," as Feyerabend characterized the Xenophanean god. It is as if these 'experiments with experiments' go just one bridge too far by trying to unite what is basically incompatible. Ask our theological colleagues in the Department of Philosophy of Religion: they live on this *aporia*.

---

[227] Fortunately quite a few modern scholars in various fields have voiced their conviction that monotheism and polytheism are *never* mutually exclusive, least of all in antique cultures. Besides the references above pp. 241 f., see e.g. Th. Wiedemann, Polytheism, Monotheism, and Religious Co-existence: Paganism and Christianity in the Roman Empire, in: I. Hamnett (ed.), *Religious Pluralism and Unbelief: Studies Critical and Comparative* (London 1990) 64–78; G. Ahn, Monotheismus-Polytheismus. Grenzen und Möglichkeiten einer Klassification von Gottesvorstellungen, in: M. Dietrich & O. Loretz (edd.), *Mesopotamica-Ugarithica-Biblica. Festschr. K. Bergerdorf* (Neukirchen 1993) 1–24; Gladigow 2002, 8: "Die Möglichkeit einer Co-Präsenz von Monotheismen aller Art mit Polytheismen kann so als 'Normalfall' von Religion in komplexen Kulturen angesehen werden." Here he speaks of "mitlaufende Polytheismen" in monotheistic systems. In an article 'Polytheismus', in: H.G. Kippenberg & M. Riesebroth (edd.), *Max Webers 'Religionssystematik'* (Tübingen 2001) 131–150, espec. 146, he introduces the notion "insuläre Polytheismen," followed by Ahn 2003, 4.

According to N. Luhmann[228] one of the major functions of religion is the 'reduction of complexity' as a strategy to create sense in the interactions of a system with its environment. This may well be true. However, in their scholarly attempt to 'reduce the complexity' of their own object of study many sociologists of religion no less than specialists of Greek religion[229] seem to hold the view that pre-modern societies structurally share a penchant for an all-encompassing unity of meaning[230] and they tend to deny premodern religions the pluralism that, on the face of it, is so characteristic of polytheism.[231] I hope to have shown that this idea needs some qualification.

We ended our second chapter on the polyinterpretability of divine action with an apposite quotation of Feyerabend. Let us end the present chapter on the compatibility of the two very diverse images of deity under discussion, the many and the one, with an equally apposite passage of another scholar from a field outside our classical domain:[232]

> The diversity of life's conditions and—connected with it—the shifts in the respective affective shades of our thinking entail that there is not one single image of god: there are several, even if, when viewed in a more abstract perspective, they appear to be incompatible.

---

[228] *The Function of Religion* (Frankfurt 1977).

[229] Above n. 2. Not only *modern* specialists: Aristotle *Met*. 586a, cites a list of opposites (*sustocheia*) including *plurality-one*, that was normative in a certain branch of Pythagoreism, which all are in the opposition positive-negative.

[230] K.-W. Dahm & V. Hörner, Religiöse Sinndeutung und gesellschaftliche Komplexität, in: R. Volp (ed.), *Chancen der Religion* (Gütersloh 1978) 81: "eine Tendenz zu einer alle Lebenszüge umfassenden Sinntotalität." Cf. Gladigow *loc. cit.* above n. 2)

[231] Criticism of this modern view by Gladigow 1990b, 250 f., contesting P.L. Berger's assertion: "Modernität schafft eine neue Situation, in der Aussuchen und Auswählen zum Imperativ wird", on the ground that it "klammert den 'Normalfall' eines polytheistischen Systems aus und konstruiert monistische Entwürfe als verbindliche Form."

[232] L. Ciompi, *Die emotionalen Grundfragen des Denkens. Entwurf einer fraktalen Affektlogik* (Göttingen 1997) 335–338, as summarized by Nicolai 2005, 24 (my translation).

CHAPTER FOUR

A GOD
WHY IS HERMES HUNGRY?[1]

Ἀλλὰ ξύνοικον, πρὸς θεῶν, δέξασθέ με.
(But by the gods, accept me as house-mate)
Ar. *Plut* 1147

1. Hungry Hermes and Greedy Interpreters

In the evening of the first day of his life baby Hermes felt hungry, or, more precisely, as the Homeric Hymn to Hermes in which the god's earliest exploits are recorded, says, "he was hankering after flesh" (κρειῶν ἐρατίζων, 64). This expression reveals only the first of a long series of riddles that will haunt the interpreter on his slippery journey through the hymn. After all, craving for flesh carries overtly negative connotations.[2] In the Homeric idiom, for instance, the expression is exclusively used as a predicate of unpleasant lions.[3] Nor does it

[1] This chapter had been completed and was in the course of preparation for the press when I first set eyes on the important and innovative study of the *Hymn to Hermes* by D. Jaillard, *Configurations d'Hermès. Une "théogonie hermaïque"* (Kernos Suppl. 17, Liège 2007). Despite many points of agreement, both the objectives and the results of my study widely diverge from those of Jaillard. The basic difference between our views on the sacrificial scene in the Hymn (which regards only a section of my present chapter on Hermes) is that in the view of Jaillard Hermes is a god "who sacrifices *as* a god" ("un dieu qui sacrifie *en tant que* dieu," p. 161; "Le dieu n'est donc, à aucun moment de l'*Hymne*, réellement assimilable à un sacrificateur humain," p. 125), while I regard "the actor Hermes as pictured in a fully human perspective throughout the scene" (below p. 322). Differences between our interpretations of related scenes from other literary sources are all affected by this primary controversy. In the present circumstances the best course of action seemed to me to retain my main text unchanged, while reserving my responses to his treatment to the footnotes. I have severely restricted myself to themes immediately relevant to the gist of my theory, especially to Jaillard's Ch. II: 'Configurations hermaiques du sacrifice'.

[2] On the palette of different connotations the expression may have had, see: Haft 1996, 38 f.

[3] The negative association returns when the expression is used a second time in the hymn, namely in v. 287, where Apollo prophecies Hermes' future life as a brigand "robbing lonely herdsmen in mountain glades, coming on their herds, hankering after flesh." To project the lion's carnal appetite onto the heroes Aias (*Il.* 11.551) and Menelaos (*Il.* 17.660), who are compared with the hungry lion (so: Haft 1996, 48

particularly suit the context in the Homeric hymn. In both characters assigned to him, that of an infant and that of a god, Hermes should have been the very last person to fancy a meaty dish. Babies, even divine babies, are hankering *after milk*, as Hermes himself, once it suits his purpose later in the hymn, helpfully reminds both his vindictive brother Apollo and the amused reader (267). Nor should, in a mythological context, a god betray an interest in the consumption of flesh unless served in the culinary speciality of *knise* (steam rising from the burnt *mêria* wrapped in fat).

Not by nature worried about negative connotations, hungry baby Hermes sets out and manages to steal the cattle of his brother Apollo. After having kindled a fire in a *bothros* (hearth pit) he *kills* two of the *immortal* cows—both physically and linguistically a rare *tour de force*.[4] He slaughters them by flinging them on their backs and piercing their spinal cords. Next, he chops them up, prepares the meat, roasts it, and divides it into twelve equal portions distributed by lot, making each portion an honorary offering for each of the twelve gods.[5] After thus having dished up the cows, the infant feels he could eat a horse. "Even though he is a god" (καὶ ἀθάνατόν περ ἐόντα), he is literally tormented by the sweet savour (ὀδμή) of the roasted meat (note: not by the *knise* of burnt meat: there was no *knise*, for there was no burnt meat).[6] Yet,

---

n. 39, as does P. Pucci in: Benjamin 1988, 134 f. regarding Sarpedon in *Il.* 12, 300 ff.) is to overburden the simile and fall prey to 'totalizing' the comparison (cf. below p. 469). The simile's dominant concern is fierceness in battle, *not* appetite. Cf. also: St.H. Lonsdale, *Creatures of Speech: Lion, Herding, and Hunting Similes in the Iliad* (Stuttgart 1990) espec. 49–70; M. Clarke, Between Lions and Men: Images of the Hero in the Iliad, *GRBS* 36 (1995) 137–159. The negative image of the Homeric lion is not affected by alleged allusions in Homer to the cultivated lion hunt as common in the Near East: M. Alden, Lions in Paradise, *CQ* 55 (2005) 335–342.

[4] The trick is not unique though: the comrades of Odysseus did the same with the immortal cattle of the Sun. Cf. Burkert 1984, 842. On the possible meaning of the words βόες ἄμβροτοι, see below n. 38.

[5] I will be silent on the question of the identity of the twelve. See, most recently, Johnston 2003, 169. However, it seems to me inevitable that—with the exception perhaps of the residents of the Olympia region—the general Greek listener to the hymn would identify them as the twelve Olympians.

[6] This 'note' occurred already in the very first draft of the Sather lecture that I gave at Berkeley in 1999. It now turns out to be a seminal one. Jaillard 2007, 105 f., espec. n. 33, in his drive to make Hermes' curious sacrificial activities, however deviant and unseemly for a god, nonetheless compatible with divine behaviour, argues that as a rule gods do enjoy the delicious odours rising from the sacrificial meat. His evidence for this generic statement, however, almost exclusively consists of references to *knise* (the product of burnt *mêria* wrapped in fat) rising from regular 'Olympian' sacrifice, and not to the *odme* coming from the roasted meat (as in the hymn). As these two are distinctly dissimilar elements in descriptions of sacrifice one should refrain from

he resists the temptation to gulp it down his holy throat. In these lines, then, we are confronted with the first identity crisis recorded in Greek literature.

As compared to normal sacrificial practice as we know it, the whole scene bristles with alarming anomalies. The manner of the slaughtering, the nature of the 'altar' (if we may call it an altar), the way in which the meat is prepared, distributed, and made available for consumption: everything is abnormal. The ritual definitely does not qualify as a customary Olympian sacrifice, which is characterized by the burning of the god's portion, usually at a *bomos,* an elevated altar, not by serving it to the gods as roasted pieces at stone slabs. Nor does it resemble a so-called 'chthonic' sacrifice, which the *bothros* might call to mind, but which is generally associated with holocausts or different types of total destruction.[7] The curious method of killing does not fit either of these two types of regular sacrifice.[8] Perhaps the whole scene

---

equating the two. Such an equation becomes even more questionable since it necessitates smoothing over the 'author's' own explicit clue that Hermes "*even though he is a god*" felt attracted by the sweet savour of the roasted meat, implying that this is not a craving appropriate for gods. Hence it is precisely this expression that necessarily implies the most obvious solution to J.'s worried observation that "the gods have not smelled anything at all" ("En un mot les dieux n'ont rien 'senti'" p. 110). They have not, because there was no *knise*, appropriate for divine nostrils, but 'only' *odme*, exclusively suitable for human olfaction. *Up to this point*, references to *trapezomata* and *splanchna* as tokens of divine carnivorous propensity ("Les dieux…. sont à leur façon 'carnivores' p. 106) are out of order since they mix up categories. I will show that, although gods indeed may ritually be treated to such solid sacrificial gifts, the *literary* sources, which do abound with gods who avidly "sniff" *knise,* never picture them as *actually partaking of* these solid foodstuffs. The only *constant* divine exception, significantly, is Hermes! The stark inconsistency in that, first, different from Hermes, all the (other) gods are obviously supposed *not* to crave meat, and, next, Hermes nevertheless treats them to this very delicacy, is a hermeneutic nightmare that no interpreter of whatever denomination has been able to tackle along lines of logic and coherence. I will argue that the only way out of this aporia is by taking the inconsistency seriously and valuing it as a (conscious or even unconscious) poetic stratagem to instil the ambivalent nature of the god (both human and divine) into the minds of the audience.

[7] On the precariousness of the opposition Olympian-chthonian (gods and sacrifices) see above Ch. I p. 144. For chthonian sacrifice especially Ekroth 2002. On distinctive vagueness of altars in visual art: G. Ekroth, Altars on Greek Vases: The Identification of *Bomos* and *Eschara*, in: Ch. Scheffer (ed.), *Ceramics in Context. Proceedings of the Internordic Colloquium on Ancient Pottery Held at Stockholm* 1997 (Stockholm 2001) 115–126.

[8] The peculiar type of manipulation of the two cows has, of course, been explained as an exponent of ephebic rituals of 'carrying the bull' (Burkert 1984, 837, 843 f.), just as the cattle-raiding is in the centre of interest with respect to ephebic or initiatory ritual: Haft 1996; Johnston 2002 and 2003.

does not even depict a sacrifice at all.[9] The god's only decent move is that, after serious consideration and not without reluctance, he decides to refrain from consumption.

The result, 2500 years after the recording of these events, is a bewildering confusion in the scholarly literature. It was once phrased in an unbeatably Prussian manner by Von Wilamowitz 1931, 324 n. 0: "Man versteht überhaupt nicht, was das schlachten soll" (We have no inkling of what all this slaughtering is about), and the enigma has given rise to perplexingly sophisticated discussions among scholars of the late twentieth century, who are generally less disposed to easy surrender. The plethora of ingenious modern interpretations includes two typical exponents of the major trends in late twentieth century scholarship.

In her book *Hermes passe* (Paris 1978) Laurence Kahn argues that the various inversions in the sacrificial picture are intended to construct an imaginary "anti-sacrifice" in which the rules governing Olympian sacrifice, established to define the distinctions between gods and mortals, are perverted. Such a sacrifice cannot and does not exist in reality but is a deliberate literary creation by an ingenious author. The inversion of ritual norms as exemplified in the systematic confusion of sacrificial vocabulary is intended to signify the ambiguous nature of Hermes, betraying as it does both divine and human traits. The language of Kahn's book is French, its perfume Paris.[10]

---

[9] Clay 1989, 118–127, disputes the generally accepted view that Hermes offers a sacrifice (whatever its nature), but interprets it as a *dais eïse* (δαὶς ἐίση), a feast entailing the consumption of meat among friends and guests. She is followed by Haft 29; 39. Cf. also N.O. Brown, *Hermes the Thief* (Madison 1947, repr. 1969) 107 f.; 126, and on *dais eïse* below n. 173. Jaillard 2007 interprets the pieces of roasted meat presented to the gods in the light of *trapezomata*, to which we shall return.

[10] Likewise Furley 1981, 38–63, after listing the anomalies and perversions in the sacrificial scene, introduces a different, mildly structuralistic interpretation, arguing that this is a case of—in the words of Cl. Lévi-Strauss—"speculations with alternatives to the norm together with their disadvantages and dangers." Such speculations "justify the shortcomings of reality, since the extreme positions are only imagined in order to show that they are untenable." Jaillard 2007, 101–108, in a more differentiated manner also following the lead of the Paris school, cannot deny the unmistakable allusions to human traits in Hermes' nature ("ambivalent entre mortel et immortel"; "caractère si 'naturellement' humain, trop humain"). However, since he interprets the scene as the first step in the "passage d'un type d'espace divin à un autre" (which in his view is the dominating theme in the 'théogonie' of the hymn: "de l'age de l'ambrosie à la knise"), he is forced to discard this aspect as being of secondary importance ("subordonné à d'autres enjeux plus décisifs"). His overall rejection of Hermes "comme ce dieu 'mineur' trop proche des hommes pour être pleinement divin" is largely based on mythical narrative, the Hymn in particular, and ignores the textual categories on which my own, quite opposite, vision is grounded.

As far as I know, not one of Walter Burkert's publications is so pronounced in its contestation of a specific interpretation as his point-blank rejection of Kahn's ideas six years later.[11] On the basis of a near-Frazerian collection of very heterogeneous evidence gathered from widely different sources and regions,[12] he manages to provide parallels for all ritual features denounced by Kahn as uncannonical. Every single detail of the sacrifice, he argues, can be recovered in existing ritual. Consequently, the sacrificial scene in the hymn may well reflect a local ritual in honour of Hermes and the twelve gods betraying clear references to an Arcadian ambience probably from the vicinity of Olympia,[13] of which only glimpses have come down to us. His conclusion is that *if* there are antitheses, they are inherent in the ritual itself, and should not be attributed to a conscious poetical inversion of that ritual.[14]

Clearly, we are here confronted with another antithesis: the one between two opposite, radically different and apparently incompatible views concerning the interpretation of ancient evidence on ritual and religion. Seldom did this *choque des opinions* receive a more poignant expression than in the present discussion. For the second time in this book, I am of course referring to the great debate between the two most eminent champions in the study of Greek religion of the second half of the twentieth century: Walter Burkert and Jean-Pierre Vernant, to whose "École de Paris" the work of Laurence Kahn so obviously

---

[11] Burkert 1984. I exclude his occasional reactions to criticism of his own theories such as: Killing in sacrifice. A reply, *Numen* 25 (1977) 77–79; Response, *Religion* 30 (2000) 283 ff. On structuralism in general there is his invective in Burkert 1979, 10–14, and cf. above p. 31.

[12] In Horstmanshoff e.a. 2002, 18 f., he adds another fascinating parallel of the sacrificial scene in a recently found Sumerian myth of King Lugalbanda and the origin of animal sacrifice. This has escaped J. Larson, Lugalba and Hermes, *CPh* 100 (2005) 1–16, who analyses the parallels in more detail.

[13] The region is very 'Hermaic': Strabo 8.3.12.343 reports that there were many herms on the roads there. But, there were more in and around Athens, which boasted that it was a Pelagian heritage: Hdt. 2.51.1. For the Attic origin see: Paus. 1.24.3, and for the Attic tetragonal form: Paus. 4.33.3.

[14] Literally: "Se sono antitesi, sono nei rituali stessi, e non nella relazione del testo alla normalitá delle pratiche sacrificiali" (838). Clay 1989, 118, contends that certain elements remain strange, for instance a pit hearth for Olympian sacrifice, and it is the *conjunction* (her italics) of elements that appear contradictory. Adding: "Even if we knew that the activity described in the poem was exactly re-enacted in cult, we would not be excused from interpreting that activity in the context of the mythological narrative." I could not agree more and wish here to acknowledge my debt to her innovative study of the hymn, even if I will follow my own track.

belongs. I have given a brief presentation of the core of this debate in the first chapter and it would be difficult to find a more apposite illustration of it then the present clash of interpretations.

Indeed, the interpretation of sacrifice in general is one of the two focuses of the great debate, as for instance *Le sacrifice dans l'antiquité* (1981) exemplarily reveals.[15] The other focus is of a different nature, but more relevant to the issue of the present chapter. It concerns the question of the nature of the Greek gods against the background of the structure of the Greek pantheon. Here, again, the 'École de Paris' takes an explicit position. We have discussed their ideas about the society of the gods in the first chapter. The Greek pantheon is a system of classification, a particular way of ordering and conceptualising the universe, which means that the world of the gods is an organised system implying definite relations between the various gods. This entails—or is grounded on—a special conception of the nature of *individual* gods. The central dogma is thus summarized by Vernant:

> The Greek gods are not individuals each with a particular single characteristic form and spiritual life. *The Greek gods are powers, not persons.*[16]

---

[15] A good critical discussion of the sacrificial theories of Burkert, Vernant/Detienne and others: C. Grottanelli, Uccidere, donare, mangiare, in: Grottanelli & Parise 1988, 3–53, on the Paris school espec. 5–8; the latter also in M. Vegetti, I Greci sono come gli altri? *Materiali filosofici* 3 (1980) 265–272. Important also and with full literature: Peirce 1993, which is basically a critique of Burkert's theory of sacrifice as being essentially the destruction of life including the feelings of fear and guilt it arouses. Attic vase painting shuns the killing act and celebrates the revelry aspects (the same conclusion and more amply documented in Van Straten 1995; cf. *idem* 2005). In a massive study J. Gebauer, *Pompe und Thysia. Attische Tieropferdarstellungen auf schwarz- und rotfigurigen Vasen* (Münster 2002), treats much the same issues ("In the end, hold on to your copy of van Straten's *Hiera kala*, but do not hesitate to get Gebauer's *Pompe and Thysia* as well": G. Ekroth, *Kernos* 19 [2006] 478). However, Peirce does not take sides with the Paris-Lausanne school either, which she censures for applying a similar type of structural reading of the ritual including the comparable limitations of that procedure. For a balanced assessment of the two positions in the current discussion on the question "ritual murder or dinner party?" see: Thomassen 2004. See also: Pirenne-Delforge 2008, Ch. 4, 'La pratique sacrificielle'. Most recent on Burkert's sacrificial theory: A. Bierl & W. Braungart (edd.), *Gewalt und Opfer: im Dialog mit Walter Burkert* (Berlin – New York 2010).

[16] Vernant 1980, 98: "Les dieux grecs sont des puissances non des personnes" an expression that returns *passim* in his work. Price 1999, 57: "The anthropomorphism of Greek cult statues does not mean that the Greeks thought that their gods actually were people" is a variation on Vernant's words, to whom he refers. He modifies the generalizing, ontological and in a way philosophical statement of Vernant into a subjective perspective of viewing, considering and identifying. Even so, in this generic form his statement is untenable. As I have argued time and again in the present book we should rather allow for multiple options and momentary choices, the latter induced

Vernant illustrates his point with a note on the god who is the subject of the present chapter:

> The study of a god such as Hermes, who is a very complex figure, must first define his relation to Zeus in order to pick out what it is in particular that Hermes contributes to the wielding of sovereign power, and then compare him with Apollo, Hestia, Dionysos and Aphrodite. Hermes has affinities with all of these gods but is distinguished from each of them by certain modes of action which are peculiar to him.[17]

He himself has complied with his own prescription in his brilliant—though not entirely incontrovertible—essay on Hermes and Hestia.[18]

Burkert's pantheon looks totally different, as we discussed in the first chapter. As to *individual* gods, he contends that each god is defined by a number of characteristics, dependent on variations in time and place. These characteristics themselves are variables associated in an opaque and seemingly arbitrary shift with a great number of other gods. Burkert's main interest is in principles of origins-evolution on the one hand and functionalistic and ritualistic social aspects of each individual god on the other.

---

by specific circumstances, as for instance standing in front of an anthropomorphic cult statue. Gordon 1979=1996, adduced by Price for his point of view, in fact represents a far more nuanced position. E.g. p. 20: "Religion then can be seen as a way of naming powers, and, by the act of classification, asserting and denying relationships between 'aspects' of powers (….) It is a simple step to represent the powers *as* people, on condition that one 'reserves' the classification—they are people, but they are also not." *Ibid.* p. 25 (on statues and pictures of gods): "As representations, statues and pictures of gods indeed represent them. They are true illusions, pictures of a world we cannot know."

[17] Vernant 1980, 99 f.

[18] Vernant 1971, I, 124–170, translated as: Hestia-Hermes: The religious expression of space and movement among the Greeks, *Social Science Information* 8 (1969) 131–168. To define Hermes as the principle of movement is of course acceptable from a mythological point of view but very difficult to reconcile with Hermes' ubiquitous visual image as a herm. The Greeks already loved to play with this inconsistency. *Anth. Pal.* XVI 186 introduces Hermes boasting that he is the swift god: "So do not place my statue devoid of hands and feet in the palaistra of all places! How can I be swift or how move my hands if you place me on a basis without these two?" A fine pun on this double reality of Hermes in Ar. *Plut.* 1097 ff., where the 'real' god Hermes wants a job and volunteers to serve as herm at the door: παρὰ τὴν θύραν στροφαῖον ἱδρύσασθέ με (1153). Kassel 1983, 11 n. 51 discovers the same ambiguity in *Anth.Pal* VI 334,3 καὶ σὺ τετραγλώχιν, μηλοσσόε, Μαιάδος Ἑρμᾶ, "wo mit Bedacht zwei Epitheta nebeneinander gesetzt sind, von denen eines der Herme, eines dem in lebendiger Wirksamkeit gedachten Gott gilt." I am not so sure here: there are several epigrams in the *Anth. Pal.* where it is the—speaking—herm itself/himself which/who explicitly boasts the protection of the herd. Cf. *Anth. Pal.* XVI 190.

The two rival schools of course do share the general acknowledgement that Hermes is characterized by a series of well-known functions and typical traits: herdsman, traveller, trader, thief, cheat, magician, messenger, interpreter, psychopompos.[19] Together these features can be and often have been explained as different facets of one more comprehensive concept. There seems to be a general consensus on 'transgression of boundaries' as a common denominator, but depending on scholars' interests, either in meaning or in origin/function, the notions and images in which this transgression is assumed to find its expression differ dramatically. Structuralistic or semiotic interpretations tend to focus on *principles,* as for instance: 'the principle of movement' or 'the ambiguous', or 'the communication between different realms or worlds',[20] while those interested in a ritualist, social or evolutionary approach may read Hermes as a prototypical 'initiand'[21]—hence viewing the central issue of the hymn as related to modern Greek rituals of 'making friends' through cunning practices of cattle raiding[22]—, a

[19] Systematic collections of characteristics of individual gods are already know from antiquity. Artemidorus 2.37, for instance, provides the following picture of Hermes (if seen in a dream): "Hermes is good for those who are studying oratory, for athletes, for gymnastic instructors, for all those whose life is devoted to trade and commerce, and for inspectors of weights and measures, since all these men regard him as their tutelary deity. He is also good for those who wish to travel abroad. For we picture him as being winged. But for other men, he foretells unrest and disturbances. He portends death for the sick because he is believed to be the conductor of souls."

[20] Fundamentally on the whole complex of transgression, movement, ambiguity: Vernant in his Hermes-Hestia study in Vernant 1971; Kahn 1978; *eadem*, Hermès, la frontière et l'identité ambiguë, *Ktema* 4 (1979) 201–211. Cf. Osborne 1985: 53: "Hermes is necessarily in-between, a bird of passage, a communicator." Cf. recently Jaillard 2007, who understands Hermes as "la puissance souveraine de l'espace intermédiaire des passages. Dans le jeu polythéiste, une telle puissance est susceptible d'agir en tout lieu où une liaison est nécessaire."

[21] So G. Costa, Hermes dio delle iniziazioni, *CCC* 3 (1982) 277–285; Burkert 1984, espec. 843 ff.; Haft 1996; F. Majorel, Hermès ou le mouvement spiralé de l'initiation, *BAGB* (2003) 53–81; Johnston 2002 and 2003: Hermes is the guide of youngsters during their maturation rites and hence the god of athletic contests, the later *Hermaia.* For this hermaic function at Crete (espec. Kato Syme) and Locri: N. Marinatos, Striding across Boundaries: Hermes and Aphrodite as Gods of Initiation, in: Dodd & Faraone 2003, 130–151, who argues that Hermes is god of maturation rites due to his nature as a leader across boundaries. For Early Iron Age Crete see also: M. Prent, *Cretan Sanctuaries and Cults. Continuity and Change from Late Minoan IIIC to the Archaic Period* (Leiden 2005), 583–593, and index s.v.

[22] Haft 1996, leaning on M. Herzfeld, *The Poetics of Manhood. Context and Identity in a Cretan Mountain Village* (Princeton 1985), espec. Ch. 5, 'Stealing to Befriend' (163–205); Johnston 2002 and 2003 with more literature on Indo-European cattle raiding in n. 9; so already P. Walcot, Cattle Raiding. Heroic Tradition and Ritual: The Greek Evidence, *HR* 18 (1979) 326–351.

'trickster'[23] or a 'herald'.[24] One view need not exclude others: they may meet for instance in the notion of 'marginality.'[25]

Although I admire and have greatly benefitted from the intellectual impetus of these recent approaches toward ancient Greek religion, I have always felt that there may be more, and no less interesting, ways of approaching the divine. We have thousands of votive inscriptions, prayers, cult representations transmitted in verbal or visual form, as well as other expressions of personal devotion. Yet the quests for origin, function or meaning—even if, or rather *because* they are so intellectually rewarding—risk making us forget that religion just *may* imply personal engagement. It is my unfashionable impression that in everyday religious practice individual Greek gods were practically never conceived of as powers, let alone as cultural products, but were in the first place envisaged as *persons* with individual characters and personalities. However great the impact that local peculiarities may have had on the perceptions of the believers,[26] the mention of a divine name or observing a picture or a statue would evoke a broad, universal image, a set of connotations which, despite all incisive local differences, is typical of that specific god, pervading both myth *and* ritual. This personal mental description (French 'signalement') is perspicuous, even if the god is considered in isolation. His/her image or personality is neither necessarily nor exclusively dependent on that of other gods, although of course divine ways of interaction, opposition or relationship may present helpful instruments for closer determination. In my view a god's image is very much inspired by his 'Sitz im Leben', his place in human life and experience.

---

[23] K. Kerényi, *Hermes der Seelenführer* (Zürich 1944); Burkert 1984, 841 ff. Several authors who compare Hermes with Odysseus (below n. 184) do so with respect to their 'trickster' nature.

[24] Not only in the sense of messenger, but also—or predominantly so—in that of sacrificial assistant in slaughtering the animals and cutting the meat, as in *Od.* 15.319–323; Athen. 160a: L.R. Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek States* V (Oxford 1909) 36; Allan, Halliday & Sikes, *The Homeric Hymns* (Oxford 1936) 306; Furley 1981, 38–63; *idem* 1996, 19; Burkert 1984, 840. Jaillard 2007, Ch. II.2: 'Manières hermaïques de rendre possible le sacrifice', highlights Hermes as the one who provides, prepares and promotes the (material) conditions for the sacrificial act. On the sacrificial function of (Hermes as) the *kerux* see: *ibid*. 158–161, with literature in n. 126.

[25] Bremmer *GR* 21: "the god of the thieves, merchants, and ephebes, in short of socially marginal groups."

[26] As argued *in extenso* in Ch. 1. Sineux 2006, 55–58, is a good illustration of the tension inherent in attempts to validate both positions: gods as persons and/or gods as powers.

I now hope to illustrate this by a discussion of the "most philanthropic among the gods,"[27] Hermes. Although the literary (*Hymn to Hermes*), the archaeological (herms, vase paintings) and the cultic/ritual (hermaic aspects of sacrifice) forms of expression have attracted considerable attention in recent years, it has never been fully realized how revealingly all these different components supplemented and indeed informed each other, co-operating in the construction of a recognizable image of the god, pervasive and consistent over a long period of time. For, if, in the first Chapter, I have argued that one god always participates in various different systems, but never simultaneously in all of them, this was not intended to mean that the systems did not mutually inform each other. They did, but selectively and in special circumstances only.

If for Vernant Hermes is 'good to think' and for Burkert 'good to function', I would like for once to trace the god whom Greeks or the Greeks found 'good to live by' (or 'live with'), the μεμφόμενον Ἑρμίδιον as Aristophanes *Pax* 922 calls him: "wretched little Hermes,"[28] despised and overlooked by big-game hunters. A quick survey of the hymn will set the tone and put us on the track of a feature that in my view is the most typical of the god: his thoroughly human nature. No god—*as a god*—has been more humanized and indeed more de-deified than Hermes on his ascendance towards a deserved place on the Olympus. In an attempt to grasp the god as an individual person and to compose a 'psychogram' with the aid of various streams of evidence, it is this particular aspect that I will further analyse, drawing on the information provided by respectively the literary genre of the fable, next visual representations, then comedy specializing in Hermes' culinary peculiarities, which—via a glance into other sources on sacrificial cultic aspects—will guide us back to hungry Hermes.

With this chapter we are leaving the central theme that interconnected the first three chapters—'the systematics' of the divine world—and enter that of the last three chapters, which are concerned with the

---

[27] Ar. *Pax* 392. Hermes is the god most frequently addressed with terms such as φίλος, φίλανδρος, φιλάνθρωπος: Hippon. fr. 24a D; Aesch. *Ag.* 515; Ar. *Pax* 393, 602; *Plut.* 1134; *Nub.* 1478. See: W.F. Otto, *Die Götter der Griechen* (Frankfurt 1947) 105 ff.

[28] If this is the correct meaning. Since this form never occurs in a passive sense the meaning 'grumbling' (at the meagreness of the offering) has also been proposed. See: Olson commentary *ad loc.*

nature of gods and more especially with correspondences or tensions between human and divine features in their nature.

2. Hermes: The Human God in the Hymn

The hymn, which on linguistic and other grounds has been claimed for Athens, Boeotia or Arcadia, and which is to be dated to the late 6th century BC,[29] opens with the birth of the god.[30] His exploits during the first day of his life will, throughout the first part of the hymn, continuously oscillate between scenes of babyhood and adolescence, which both carry definitely human connotations.

Indeed, this common denominator in the consistent emphasis on the anthropomorphic aspects of the god and his activities has not escaped attention. It is deployed by Kahn to underpin the ambiguous nature of her god, by those who see Hermes as a prototypical ephebe in a transitional period, by Clay to elucidate the 'Werdegang' of her god as a reflection of "his anomalous position: not a mortal, but not yet fully a god"[31] and—more implicitly—by those who have understood the hymn as a satirical or comical parody.[32] I will present some of the most relevant passages.

---

[29] Attica or Boeotia are the most likely places of origin. The traditional date round 600 BC must be abandoned on linguistic and lexicographical grounds: H. Görgemanns, Rhetorik und Poetik im homerischen Hermes-hymnus, in: H. Görgemanns & E.A. Schmidt (edd.), *Studien zum antiken Epos* (Meisenheim 1978) 113–128; Janko 1982, 140–143, who at 149 regards: "the close decades of the sixth century as the era of the poem's creation." As for the supposed occasions of its performance Johnston 2002 and 2003 attractively suggests festivals of Hermes that encouraged or celebrated the maturation of males which she identifies as the athletic Hermaia. See 2003, 171–174 for a list of possible locales where the hymn could have been performed.

[30] On the places in Greece to which the birth is assigned in various sources see: Clay 1989, 103. On the birth of Hermes in the hymn and literary testimonia of its place in Arcadia, see: Jost 1985, 441–444.

[31] Clay 1989, 109 and *passim* as elements of an account of how the new-born Hermes won his place and his *timai* amongst the divine society at the Olympus. *Ibid.* 96: "The *timai* of all others have been divided and distributed. Nothing remains for Hermes, who is thus obliged to acquire his honors by theft or exchange." Cf. already more than a century ago, A. Gemoll, *Die homerischen Hymnen* (Leipzig 1886) 184, who claimed that it is all about how the newborn Hermes won recognition as a powerful god on Olympus. E.S. Greene, Revising Illegitimacy: The Use of Epithets in the Homeric Hymn to Hermes, *CQ* 55 (2005) 343–349, shows how his rise to an Olympian status is alluded to in his epithets throughout the hymn. It is this *Werdegang* of the god that has received a new and even more consistent treatment by Jaillard 2007.

[32] On the comic aspects of the hymn: K. Bielohlawek, Komische Motive in der homerischen Gestaltung des griechischen Göttermythus, *ARW* 28 (1930) 203–209.

After having fabricated the lyre Hermes sings a song (55–60) of how Hermes was borne as the son of Zeus and the nymph Maia, "a kind of 'Hymn to Hermes'" (Clay 1989, 108). A god as rhapsode of his own infancy is surprising and the poet does not fail to focus our attention to this strange reversal by 'italicizing' the peculiarity: "telling all the glorious tale of *his own* begetting" (ἤν τ' αὐτοῦ γενεήν).[33] Very human-focussed all this, both in subject and in context. The poet typifies this performance as "an improvisation: sweet random snatches, as youths bandy taunts at festivals." Perhaps we may see it as an allusion to the burlesque nature of the hymn itself. At any rate it is a clear characterization of the god as ephebe. Later, in the 'Olympian' part of the Hymn (425 ff.), his second song concerns loftier issues: "the story of the deathless gods and of the dark earth, how at the first they came to be, and how each one received his portion" (ὡς τὰ πρῶτα γένοντο καὶ ὡς λάχε μοῖραν ἕκαστος). First he sang of Mnemosyne, then Zeus and next "the rest of the immortals according to their order in age, and told how each was born, mentioning all in order" (ὡς γεγάασιν ἕκαστος.... πάντ' ἐνέπων κατὰ κόσμον). To sing the birth and life of gods in a very Hesiodic fashion[34] is the task *par excellence* of *human* bards.[35]

Altogether Hermes' self-praise represents a straight reversal of divine and human qualities. The whole ambiguity is mirrored in the alarm-

---

[33] Clay 1989, 109: "Normally, of course, the mortal hymn-poet praises and celebrates a god, but here we have a god—whose precise status is still ambiguous—praising himself." Cf. also *H.Apollo* 158–75. It is grossly misunderstanding the whole purport of this passage to eliminate this text as a later insertion as Humbert does.

[34] Note that, using the very same terms, Herodotus 2.53 tells us what the poets Homer and Hesiod had done: "But it was only—if I may so put it—the day before yesterday that the Greeks came to know the origin and form of the various gods, and whether or not all of them had always existed. (Ὅθεν δὲ ἐγένοντο ἕκαστος τῶν θεῶν, εἴτε αἰεὶ ἦσαν πάντες, ὁκοῖοί τε τινες τὰ εἴδεα, οὐκ ἠπιστέατο). For Homer and Hesiod (....) were the ones who composed for the Greeks the theogonies and who gave the gods their appropriate titles, powers and offices, also describing them by their appearance" (οὗτοι δέ εἰσι οἱ ποιήσαντες θεογονίην Ἕλλησι καὶ τοῖσι θεοῖσι τὰς ἐπωνυμίας δόντες καὶ τιμάς τε καὶ τέχνας διελόντες καὶ εἴδεα αὐτῶν σημήναντες).

[35] There are divine singers, but they belong at the court of the Olympians. There it is, of course, the specific task of the Muses, who are the instructors of human bards (*H.Muses and Apollo* 3; *H.Artemis* 18 ff.; *H.Helios* 17 f.; *H.Selene* 19 f.) and are hence in a stereotyped formula invoked to tell what the bards are going to tell. Clay 1989, 138, interprets the singing of the Theogony as Hermes' job to sing the ordered cosmos culminating in the final event of his own birth, 139: "Hermes is the first to be able to sing a theogony, because only with his birth is the configuration of the divine cosmos complete."

ingly inconsistent description of the grotto: in the first hymn sung by Hermes it is described as "bright home, with tripods all over the house and the abundant cauldrons," as suits a hymn about a nymph as sung by a mortal bard. Quite at odds with the lowly dwelling pictured in later passages, describing Hermes own adventures, as sung by the god Hermes on his way towards Olympus. So different indeed that the various descriptions have been taken as evidence for multiple authorship, not surprisingly, but very erroneously.[36]

In the meantime Hermes has been pondering another ungodly act (62–67), one that concerns a basic marker of the *condition humaine* and one that, according to the poet, could only be achieved through "sheer trickery, deeds such as knavish folk pursue in the dark night time." As we have seen Hermes is now "hankering after meat" (κρειῶν ἐρατίζων, 64), a desire incongruous with divine or infant behaviour. The very same desire is re-evoked in similar terms in ll. 130–133, where, albeit a god, Hermes is tormented by the sweet savour (ὀδμή) of the roasted meat, but does not give in. Here as elsewhere in the hymn he 'plays' the role of man, more especially of an adolescent.[37] Accordingly, the whole *aprosdokêton* is associated with an unholy preparatory action: the theft of cattle, both grandiose and primordial. From now on the tale is located in a distinctly human world,[38] as is

[36] Lit. in Clay 1989, 110 n. 48, who herself thinks "depending on the circumstances, Hermes may glorify the cave, as here, or denigrate it, as he does later." More explicit Johnston 2003, 158.

[37] As, again explicitly, he does in ll. 134–136, where he "put away the fat and all the meat, and set it up high *as a token of his recent theft*." These three passages belong closely together and, *pace* Jaillard, together undeniably and no doubt intentionally evoke the behaviour of a distinctly human adolescent.

[38] Even if Apollo's cattle are immortal and feed on unmown—that is sacred—meadows. Some commentators do not allow *ambrotoi* its full force. Vernant and Kahn do (see Clay 113 n. 61), but the facts as recorded in the hymn prove that the cows are *not* immortal. Again we are in an ambiguous strait, where Hermes, despite his divinity acting like a human, kills (hence 'mortalizes') cattle which by nature are immortal. Reversal all over the place. Vernant, Kahn (50) and Burkert 1984, 842 argue that by removing them from the divine sphere their domestication will simultaneously introduce them into the realm of men and mortality, and cf. now the astute discussion by Jaillard 2007, 137–143. Cl. Leduc, "Le pseudo-sacrifice d'Hermès." Hymne homérique à Hermès I, vers 112–142. Poésie rituelle, théologie et histoire, *Kernos* 18 (2005) 141–165, argues that the cattle play a part in the invention of exchange (*and* that Hermes is fire! On which see also the comparison between Hermes and Agni by P.-L. van Berg in: F. Labrique [ed.], *Religions méditerranéennes et orientales* [Cairo 2002]).

immediately illustrated by the meeting with the old man tilling his vineyard (90–93).[39]

Then follows the most seminal human action, the one with which we opened this chapter: the so-called sacrificial scene. Whatever the meaning or the ritual references, the actor Hermes is pictured in a fully human perspective throughout the scene,[40] right till the moment that he decides not to consume the meat. There is an emphatic reminder of his divine nature ("though an immortal god"), but applied to underline his thoroughly human behaviour in craving flesh. This passage marks the most explicit and revealing moment of the deliberately shaky balance between the divine and the human personalities of god Hermes. As a human being Hermes craved the meat;[41] as a god, he could not *eat* it without betraying—that is: losing—his divine status.[42]

So far we have not mentioned one curious expression designating the object of Hermes' appetite: ὀσίη κρεάων (130). Though marked by a variety of meanings dependent on its context, when that con-

---

[39] He is the only human being to play a rôle in the hymn. In this respect the *Hymn to Hermes* is unique. See: Clay 1989, 115. On the provenance of this story: D. Malcolm, Unhelpful Helpers: Folk-tale Vestiges in the *Homeric Hymns*, *Prometheus* 32 (2006) 194–207. On the special nature of Hermes' address to him: Y.Z. Tzifopoulos, Hermes and Apollo at Onchestos in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes:* The Poetics and Performance of Proverbial Communication, *Mnemosyne* 53 (2000) 148–163, revealing another expertise of the god: his mastery in manipulating and controlling proverbial wisdom: "he is not only a trickster in deeds, but also in words, because Hermes loves to talk and is good at it" (163).

[40] L. Radermacher, *Der homerische Hermeshymnus* (Wien-Leipzig 1931) 99: "Keine Andeutung spricht dafür, dass H. dem Dichter etwas anderes war als ein Opfernder." This finds support in the conclusion of N. Himmelmann, *Tieropfer in der griechischen Kunst* (Nordrhein-Wesfälische Ak. Wiss. Geistesw. Vortr. G.349 [1997]) 52, that "Götter selbst zahme Tiere nicht töten (können)."

[41] Note that the earliest versions of the myth do not mention this craving for meat (see Johnston 2003, n. 6), which is probably an invention of the author of the hymn.

[42] Scholars of divergent denominations agree on this reason for Hermes' inhibition. "Can it be that by eating he would have forfeited the position he claimed as one of the Twelve Gods?" thus H.G. Evelyn-White (following Gemoll) in the Loeb edition of 1914. H. Jeanmaire, Le substantif ὁσία et sa signification comme terme technique dans le vocabulaire religieux, *REG* 58 (1945) 66–89, espec. 80: "c'est en sa qualité de dieu qu'Hermès (…) se voit interdire d'en [i.e. de la viande sacrificielle] jouir en le dégustant effectivement." J.-P. Vernant in: Detienne & Vernant 1979, 242: "Hermès se garde de manger les viandes qu'il a préparées. S'il goûtait, il deviendrait un homme." Burkert 1984, 837 f., in accordance with his theory of the ritual background of the whole scene is forced to look for a different meaning. Likewise, though from a totally different perspective, Jaillard 2007 must downplay any suggestion of the god's human nature. Below we will discuss circumstances in which gods are assumed to partake of human food including meat. This, however, is always in a context of official Olympian sacrifice.

text is a sacrificial ceremony the term ὅσιος most probably refers to food, especially meat, that after all obligations to the gods have been fulfilled, is now released for human consumption. This was and still is the opinion of a number of scholars, most of them belonging to an earlier generation. They agree that ὁσίη is "that which the divine law concedes to men."[43] If true, this would imply that Hermes, besides craving a human meal, also refers to it with a term typically in use for the 'human's portion' of the sacrificial meat. Accordingly Benveniste and Kahn,[44] among others, argue that Hermes *mis*uses the term by speaking as a mortal rather than as a god.

Recent years, however, have witnessed several attempts at a more encompassing and general definition of the concepts covered by ὅσιος and especially of the substantive ὁσίη. For the Homeric Hymns in particular some consensus seems to have grown round the notion: (divine) privilege or τιμή.[45] In the context of the Hymn, at first sight

---

[43] Burkert 1985, 270, on this passage: "Here *hosios* designates the desacralization of sacralization;" *idem* 1984, 838; "si tratta della disponibilità della carne per la consumazione normale dopo il compimento dei riti sacri," with earlier literature in n. 19. He compares it to Latin *profanare*, on which see: H. Wagenvoort, Profanus, profanare, *Mnemosyne* IV ser. 2 (1949) 319–332 = *idem, Pietas. Selected Studies in Roman Religion* (Leiden 1980) 25–38. Similarly Jeanmaire *o.c.* above (n. 42) and cf. next note.

[44] E. Benveniste, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes* vol. 2 (Paris 1969) 201; Kahn 1978, 68–71; and see preceding note.

[45] So especially: Gh. Jay-Robert, Essai d'interprétation du sens du substantif *hosiê* dans l'*Odyssée* et dans les *hymnes homériques*, *REA* 101 (1999) 5–20, with an extensive discussion of previous theories. In the *Hymn to Hermes* 172 f.: "As for privilege, I am going to enter on my rights, the same as Apollo" (ἀμφὶ δὲ τιμῆς, κἀγὼ τῆς ὁσίης ἐπιβήσομαι ἧς περ Ἀπόλλων) play a dominant role (cf. Jaillard 2007, 86–91). For later notions of the terms, especially as compared to *hieros* see the balanced discussion in W.R. Connor, "Sacred" and "Secular." Ἱερὰ καὶ ὅσια and the Classical Athenian Concept of State, *Anc.Soc.* 19 (1988) 161–188, and above all J.H. Blok, Deme Accounts and the Meaning of *hosios* Money in Fifth-Century Athens, *Mnemosyne* 63 (2010) 61–93, and *eadem*, A Covenant between Gods and Men: *hiera kai hosia* and the Greek *polis*, in: C. Rapp (ed.), *City—Empire—Christendom: Changing Context of Power and Identity in Antiquity* (Cambridge-New York, forthcoming 2011), who argues that the reading of *hosios* as 'desacralized' (i.e., after consecration to the gods returned to the human sphere) ultimately derives from the assumption that *hosios* can mean 'secular, profane', notably attested in its application to money. Her analysis reveals, however, that *hosios* money is human property to be used in a way in accordance with *hosiê* and hence pleasing to the gods. *Hosiê*, as she argues in the second article mentioned, indicates a set of norms of human conduct safeguarded by the gods which may apply in particular to human obligations to the gods; *hosios* and cognates refer to (creating) a condition that is in accordance with *hosiê*. Application of *hosiê* and cognates to gods is extremely exceptional, revealing conscious deviation of normal usage that can be explained by its rhetorical or literary context. In other words, *hosios* refers as a rule to the human position vis-à-vis the gods, not the other way round. As could be

this might imply that young Hermes wished to have his share of the privilege of the gods that consisted of roasted meat, as for instance in the form of *trapezomata* presented to the gods after the sacrifice.[46] This interpretation, however, is not compatible with the author's emphatic clue that *being a god* Hermes should not hanker after roasted meat. The expression καὶ ἀθάνατόν περ ἐόντα would be totally out of order if the gods indeed do appear to fancy a bite of roasted beef. On the other hand, if Hermes, albeit a god, should crave the meat released for *human* consumption thus jeopardizing his divine nature, this would be at odds with the fact that he did offer the portions of meat to the twelve gods.

It is impossible to determine with certainty what the 'author' may have 'intended' with our passage. Either of the two interpretations runs up against intractable inconsistencies. It is hard to avoid the impression that here we find a confirmation of West's severe verdict:[47]

> The Hymn to Hermes (…) is the most untraditional in its language, with many late words and expressions, and many used in slapdash and inaccurate ways; and it is the most incompetent in construction, with many narrative inconsistencies and redundancies and no command of the even tempo appropriate to epic storytelling.

However, adherents of the "save the author" school introduced in our second chapter, who would rather bite their tongue then admit a blunder of their author, may also prefer to adopt the following conclusion. This conclusion is that with the scene under discussion we have arrived at the core of the whole dilemma. The Hymn constantly pictures Hermes as uniting two natures, that of the god and that of the mortal. Throughout the Hymn the author plays with this ambivalence, but his play is a precarious one. Blending a mortal and an immortal nature in one character *must* end up in inconsistencies. Whether the resulting dissonance in the present scene originated as an intentional element of the author's narrative strategy or as an unconscious inaccuracy in the end is immaterial. The inconsistency is there and as

---

expected, Jaillard 2007, 107 f. rejects the meaning: "la part de viandes dont les hommes peuvent librement disposer" and prefers "la part qui, dans le sacrifice, constitue la timé des dieux."

[46] This interpretation, as suggested by Jaillard 2007, would, however, reduce the provider of the gift to the human category, whereas the identification of the meat offering as a *dais* (Clay) might save Hermes' divine status.

[47] M.L. West, *Homeric Hymns. Homeric Apocrypha. Lives of Homer* (Loeb 2003) 12.

such testifies to a central theme of the Hymn: Hermes god and man, including the tensions inherent in such an impossible alliance. This is an ambivalence that the author never stops calling to mind, as for example a few verses later where it is said that during his stealthy journey back home—that is back to the grotto where he was born—he was not seen by *any of gods and men*. There is no other Homeric hymn in which the expression "gods and men"[48] occurs so frequently.

After all this, the god re-assumes his role as a baby, this time indeed a role in the true sense of the word, because he uses it both as a cover for hiding and as evidence for his defence, i.e. in order to prove his innocence. From this moment on the spotlight turns towards the world of the gods. Hermes now (166–181) sets out for the position that he deserves in the society of the gods.[49] But even here he cannot conceal the human aspects of his nature. He is looking forward to enjoying utopian miracles moulded *inter alia* in terms of food, but once more the types of food do not suit the fashion of Olympos. Two of the three terms indicating the coveted abundance of divine life—πλούσιος, ἀφνειός—have strong associations with corn in archaic poetry, the third—πολυλήιος—literally means "with rich corn-fields."[50] Where, first, he "was greedy for flesh", now he betrays an interest in corn. Both are equally inappropriate diets for a god. Just like bloody sacrifice, consumption of corn belongs to the basic markers of human culture.

By now the reader is firmly instilled with the suggestion that Hermes, though unconditionally claiming divine status, is deeply infected with all kinds of human associations in both positive and negative respects. Time and again he inadvertently crosses the line and ends up in the 'wrong' category. This ludic balancing between divine and human worlds, so far most conspicuously evoked through

---

[48] Not counting the Homeric epithet of Zeus, "father of gods and men." Later his mother prophecies that Hermes will be *a great worry to mortal men and deathless gods*" (144 f.). Apollo asks whether Hermes has his lyre *from a god or a mortal man* (441), adding that its sound *no man nor god has ever heard* (444 f.). He also promises to love no other among the immortals, *neither god nor man sprung from Zeus*, than Hermes (525 f.). Hermes' belonging to two worlds is emphatically summarized in the final lines (576 ff.) "*He keeps company with all mortals and immortals.*"

[49] Clay 1989, 127: "With the sure knowledge of his divinity, Hermes' status has changed. But it remains anomalous: he is indeed a god, but one without *timai*. The rest of the hymn will depict his acquisition of *timai*."

[50] Demeter's bestowal of these central blessings on her mortal worshippers in *H.Demeter* is described exactly in these terms.

the medium of diet-markers, reaches its climax when the poet suddenly concludes with a complete reversal of what we have seen so far (243 ff). The arguably most godly god Apollo unmasks the human baby as a real god by detecting three closets full of nectar and ambrosia in his grotto. Besides which he finds much gold and silver and garments of the nymph, purple and silvery white, "such as are kept in the sacred houses of the blessed gods." Thus Hermes is exposed as a god rather than a harmless baby. Indeed, from now on the focus is on the divine nature of the child.

Even after his full recognition as a god, however, both Apollo's prediction (457) of great future *kleos* for Hermes and Hermes' own claim to *kudos* (477) are anomalous[51] because these are typically human terms for human achievements. Little surprise, then, that the three *timai* or *gera* that will implement his *kudos* all sound a human ring. On the one hand he will be "keeper of herds" (491–498), expressly reconfirmed by Zeus in the final passage (568–571). This definitely establishes his position in the space of man, as does his additional 'office' revealed only at this moment, namely "to establish deeds of barter *amongst men* (ἐπαμοίβια ἔργα θήσειν ἀνθρώποισι) throughout the fruitful earth" (516), including the threat of theft, which Apollo fears. Secondly, Apollo gives him (529 ff.):

> a splendid staff of riches and wealth, which will keep you scatheless accomplishing every task (decree?), whether of words and deeds that are good (ἥ σε φύλαξει, πάντας ἐπικραίνουσ' ἄθλους [?] θεμοὺς [?][52] ἐπέων τε καὶ ἔργων τῶν ἀγαθῶν) which I claim to know through the utterance of Zeus.

Although it is given a new and unexpected function here, the *kerukeion* is clearly marked by its conventional qualities ("of riches and wealth") as well, that is its magical power to do miraculous works. Here, then, we have his second great privilege: the field of magic and miracles through his magical rod. In Greece, as opposed to for instance Egypt, magic is the work of man, not of gods. Generally, gods do not need instruments for working miracles. Hermes is dependent upon his staff. Thirdly, whereas the domain of serious prophecy is typically reserved for gods and, among them, especially for Apollo, Hermes by way of consolation prize "receives the Thriaiai" (564), a far humbler and more

[51] As Kahn 1978, 159–164 has noted. Cf. Jaillard 2007, 80 ff.
[52] Mss. θεούς.

common oracle centre, which works through the intermediation of bees.[53] And this special trick Hermes is even allowed to teach to mortals (565). Finally Zeus ends his catalogue of *timai* by singling out a prerogative that belongs to Hermes alone of all the Olympians: the exclusive right to penetrate into the underworld and to carry messages to Hades. Other Olympians may not enter the realm of Hades. Hermes may, or rather must. Is this—in the present context—because of his human (= mortal) aspects?

Very appropriately the hymn ends with the phrase: "He consorts with all mortals and immortals (ὅ γε θνητοῖσι καὶ ἀθανάτοισι ὁμιλεῖ, 576 f.)[54] A final, but most emphatic proclamation of Hermes' *lasting* position 'in between'.

In his hymn, then, Hermes pushes out frontiers in the accumulation of human traits in one god. Let us now see what other types of evidence have to say.

3. Hermes: The Eternal Dupe in the Fable

One of the literary genres largely ignored as a source for Greek culture and society and not least religion is that of the "mendacious narrative counterfeiting truth" (λόγος ψευδὴς εἰκονίζων ἀλήθειαν, Theon *Progymn.* 3), the fable.[55] The corpus[56] turns out to be prolific in picturesque

---

[53] Johnston 2003, 164 f. On Hermes' oracular qualities see also below n. 90.

[54] Adding: "he brings little profit (παῦρα μὲν οὖν ὀνίνησι), but continually throughout the dark night he cozens the tribes of mortal men."

[55] Some recent introductions: F.R. Adrados (ed.), *La Fable* (Entretiens Hardt XXX, 1984); N. Holzberg, *Die antike Fabel. Eine Einführung* (Darmstadt 1993); G.-J. van Dijk, The Function of Fables in Graeco-Roman Romance, *Mnemosyne* 49 (1996) 513–541; *idem*, Αἶνοι, Λόγοι, Μῦθοι: *Fables in Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic Greek Literature. With a Study of the Theory and Terminology of the Genre* (Suppl. Mnemosyne. Leiden 1997). F.R. Adrados' momentous three volume *History of the Graeco-Latin Fable* (1999–2003) is easily the most exhaustive study. Albeit an indispensable standard work for the specialist, it should not be recommended reading for the non-initiate. The fable had a strong hold on comedy, and the similarities between the two genres are obvious: S. Schirru, *La favola in Aristofane* (Berlin 2009).

[56] If there is some probability in attributing the hymn to the late 6th century, as we saw, and near certainty in dating the earliest herms to the same period, as we will see later, to hazard a chronology of the—earliest—fables is less, if at all, possible. Although fables do occur in the archaic Greek literature (F. Lasserre, La fable en Grèce dans la poésie archaïque, in Adrados 1984 [*o.c.* preceding note], 61–103), the earliest existent collections go back to post-classical times (F.R. Adrados, Les collections de fables à l'époque hellénistique et romaine, in: *idem* 1984, 137–195). Aesop, generally dated in the 6th c. BC, is legend rather then history, and tracing back fables to this 'author' is

vignettes which together provide a remarkably specific and consistent characterization of the god Hermes.[57] This is the more remarkable as gods are by no means regulars in the fable. With Aphrodite (6 times), Apollo (10), Athena (6), Demeter (3), Dionysos (2), Hera (3) and Herakles (6) in Perry's corpus all is said and done. More important, however, is that unlike Hermes they rarely figure as the chief actors themselves. Practically always their function is to witness or punish or reward the actions of mortal protagonists. Zeus and Hermes are the exceptions. The first is the most frequently mentioned god (37), mostly, however, in an 'unmarked' position, as the ultimate divine authority, principle of justice, often simply as a symbol of god or the divine in general. In this impersonal rôle, very similar to the one we have met in Chapter II, Zeus is not an alluring target for satirical puns of allusions. Hermes, on the other hand, is not only a good second in the frequency of his fables (21), but clearly distinguishes himself from all other deities in two respects. First, in the majority of his fables he is the principal character and actor, and secondly, he stands out for the fixed characteristics of his demeanour.[58] I will focus on the most conspicuous aspects, as they are moulded in a few stereotyped sets of

---

a desperate enterprise (M.L. West, The Ascription of Fables to Aesop in Archaic and Classical Greece, in: Adrados *ibid.* 105–136). Yet it can hardly be doubted that many of the fables that we will discuss may go back to the classical period. However, even those which originated in a later period may be considered to be at least illustrative, since other types of evidence reveal a remarkable continuity in the 'sociogram' of the god Hermes throughout antiquity.

[57] I adopt the numbering of B.E. Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus* (Loeb 1965) since, in addition to his edition of the metrical fables of Babrius and Phaedrus, he provides a survey of all ancient fables in their different forms. So does Laura Gibbs in her very useful *Aesop's Fables. A new translation* (Oxford 2002), whose introduction was the first that provides a brief history of the different collections and versions of the fable understandable to the non-initiate such as the present author. Her index is more comprehensive than Perry's and I refer to this index for the testimonia about the other gods as mentioned in the text. References to fables are henceforth organized as follows: Babrios, Phaedrus and Appendix Perottina refer to the numbers of the fables as edited in Greek and English translation by Perry. P. refers to the numbers in the survey of all other fables in his edition. H. refers to Halm's edition.

[58] In the text only the directly relevant fables are quoted. Others have no bearing on our present theme, as for instance P. 173 = H. 308: Hermes and the wood-cutter (H. as giver of good fortune); P. 179 = H. 329 and P. 103 = H. 138: Hermes as messenger of Zeus; P. 323 = H. 205: A raven was caught in a snare and promised Apollo that if he could get free he would offer some frankincense to him. But when his wish was granted he forgot his vow. Later the same happened but now he promised a sacrifice to Hermes. But Hermes replied: "Oh wretched raven, how can I trust you, who have disavowed your first master and cheated him?" In a few other fables Hermes is only mentioned *en passant*.

representations. These recurrent traits are, first, that he is the only god who is consistently presented in (mildly) burlesque or even ludicrous roles, and, secondly, that he is emphatically depicted as socializing with mortals in a definitely *human* fashion.

1. *Burlesques*

One of the major themes in this category consists of allusions to Hermes' existence as a statue—sometimes in the form of a herm—, which is good for five ludicrous fables, which I present here, sometimes in summarized versions:

> 1) A man had a wooden statue of Hermes for sale and cried around that "he was selling a god who would provide both goods and profits." To the not unreasonable question why then he wished to sell it instead of reaping the profit for himself, the response was: "I need ready cash and the god is never in a hurry to render his services." (P. 99 = H. 2)
>
> 2) A craftsman had a wooden image of Hermes. Every day he poured libations to it and offered sacrifice (θύων) but he continued to fare badly. In a fit of anger with the god, he picked up the image by the leg and dashed it to the ground. From it's broken head gold poured forth. While he was gathering this, the man said: "Hermes, you are a pig-headed fellow and ungrateful to your friends. When I was serving you with adoration you gave me no help at all, and now that I have insulted you, you have repaid me with many blessings. I did not understand the strange kind of worship that you require" (τὴν εἰς σὲ καινὴν εὐσέβειαν οὐκ ᾔδειν). (Babrius 119)[59]
>
> 3) Wishing to know in how much esteem he was held by men, Hermes *took the form of a mortal man* and entered the workshop of a statuary. First he asked the price of a statue of Zeus, which was one drachme. Next one of Hera, which was higher. Then, seeing a statue of himself and supposing that men would consider this more valuable, since he was the divine messenger and the god of profit, he asked "How much is this

[59] We have the same fable in Aesopus 66 (H), where it is the statue of *a* god, not Hermes. Very similar *Anth. Pal.* XVI 187, where a wooden image of Hermes, thrown to the ground, pours forth gold and the conclusion is: "Often before a violent act yielded profit." More distantly related, but with the same message: Calim. *Iambe* 7, whose *Diegesis* tells us that fishermen haul up a wooden Hermes in their nets, but, despising it, try to split it up into firewood, then try to burn it,—all in vain,—throw it back into the sea, only to recover it again in their nets the next day. Then they realize that it is a god and found a cult. See: I. Petrovic, The Life Story of a Cult Statue as an Allegory: Kallimachos' Hermes Perpheraios, in Mylonopoulos 2010, 205–224.

> Hermes?" "If you buy the other two," said the statuary, "I'll throw that one in for free."(P. 88 = H. 137)[60]
>
> 4) A sculptor was trying to sell a marble statue of Hermes. One man wanted it for a gravestone, another wanted to set it up as an image of the god himself (ὃς μὲν εἰς στήλην, ὁ δὲ ὡς θεὸν καθιδρύσων). In his sleep the sculptor saw Hermes at the gate of dreams saying: "So then, my fate is being weighed in your balances: it remains to be seen whether you will make me a corpse or a god" (ἢ γάρ με νεκρὸν ἢ θεὸν σὺ ποιήσεις). (Babrius 30)
>
> 5) By the roadside stood a square-hewn statue of Hermes, with a heap of stones at the base. A dog came up and said: "I salute you first of all, Hermes, but, more than that, I would anoint you. I could not think of just passing by a god like you, especially since you are the athlete's god." "I shall be grateful to you," said Hermes, "if you do not lick off such ointment as I have already, and do not make a muss on me. Beyond that, pay me no respect." (Babrius 48)[61]

We observe that Hermes is very much identified or at least strongly associated with his statuesque representation,[62] and that this hermaic representation is an easy prey for cheerful mockery or even outright maltreatment. The god as statue is depreciated, derided, or knocked about, *inter alia* because he falls short of expectations. In the form of a herm he is even scoffed at by a dog, which threatens to anoint it in a way only Walter Burkert would acknowledge as an anointment.[63]

---

[60] Furley 1996, 27 explains this as an allusion to Hermes' appendage to the cult of Zeus and Hera, as herms generally are places of communication with (other) gods in scenes of prayer and sacrifice, as we shall discuss later.

[61] I wonder whether this could be a pun on the proverbial expression: Ἑρμῆν μήτ' ἀλείψῃς μήτ' ἀπαλείψῃς (*Paroem. Gr.* II 167 no. 10), said of those who under the pretence of offering a benefice pinch rather than bestow it. An ancient commentator explains this as based on the custom of poor people taking the oil rubbed on herms in the public baths for their own use. For the description of the anointing of a herm by a *deisidaimon* see: Theophrastos XVI 5. Cf. also the treatment of the *hermaia,* Hermes' most common edibles, below p. 364 ff. A distant parallel in a vase painting shows a ram which pinches a twig from Hermes' altar (Van Straten 1995, pl. 23).

[62] It is not by chance that the Greek proverb "Hermes is in the stone" (ἐν τῷ λίθῳ Ἑρμῆς, Arist. *Met*. 1002a22; 1017b7) has chosen Hermes/herm for expressing the intended meaning. Compare, too, the account by Apuleius *Apol.* 61 who had asked a statue carver to make for him *aliquod simulacrum cuiuscumque vellet dei, cui ex more meo supplicassem*, which "statue of whatever god" turned out to have become a statuette of Mercurius/Hermes. Here, however, the situation is perhaps more complicated: V.J.Chr. Hunink, Apuleius Madaurensis, *Pro se de magia*, II (Amsterdam 1997) *ad loc.*

[63] (Provocative) urinating *on* (or near) statues was a popular branch of sports. In Ar. *Vesp*. 389 ff. Philokleon prays the hero Lykos to help him and promises never to piss against his railings again. Such maltreatment was not appreciated by the intended

Another thematic target for derision is Hermes' failure in his role of dispenser of gifts or qualities, positive or negative, which Zeus had decided to bestow on humanity. Though it is his task to distribute equal portions, as we discovered in the sacrificial scene in the hymn, he is not really very good at it. Nor does he always emerge as the luckiest party himself. There are three instances working variations on the theme that Hermes is supposed to distribute 'equal portions' among mankind but for some reason fails in his mission. Two other fables are related but of a slightly different nature. Though the mishap is not always through a fault of his own, the stories convey an unmistakable impression of clumsiness. The very god who is praised as bringer of luck, falls prey to misfortune himself.

> 6) Zeus after having created man, entrusted Hermes with pouring some intelligence over mankind. Hermes, *making equal portions*, poured for each man his portion. Thus it happened that the men of small stature were completely filled with the brain liquid and so became intelligent, but tall men have less sense than others. (P. 108 = H. 150)
>
> 7) It was Hermes' job to distribute the lies equally over the world. He loaded them in his chariot and *distributed small portions* in each country but in Arabia his car broke down and the Arabians plundered it and took all what was left. Hence, more than any other people the Arabs are liars and cheats. (Babrius 57. Cf. H.141)
>
> 8) Zeus charged Hermes to pour over all the artisans the poison of lies. Hermes pulverized it and, *making an equal amount for everyone,* he poured it over them. But when he got as far as the cobbler he still had plenty of the poison left, so he just took what remained in the mortar and poured it over him. And since then all artisans have been liars, but most of all the cobblers. (P. 103 = H. 136)

Related, but of a slightly different nature:

> 9) Zeus ordained that Hermes should inscribe on *ostraka* the faults of men and deposit these *ostraka* in a little wooden box near him so that he could do justice in each case. But the *ostraka* got mixed up together and some came sooner, others later, to the hands of Zeus for him to pass judgements on them as they deserved. (H. 126)

---

victims: *SHA Caracalla* 5, damnati sunt eo tempore qui urinam in eo loco fecerunt in quo statuae aut imagines erant principis. An emperor himself might claim exemption from this rule: Nero so much contemned Dea Syria *ut urina contaminaret* (Suet. *Nero* 56). For a collection of curses against the fouling of public places, monuments or sanctuaries see: Versnel 1985, 258. Add: *SEG* 46.1157; *CIRB* 939; *SB* I 4531–4532.

Finally, the god himself falls victim to a flawed distribution:

> 10) A traveller had vowed to offer half of everything he might find to Hermes. He finds a wallet with almonds and dates (although he had hoped that it would contain money), eats everything edible and gives the rest to Hermes: "Here you have, Hermes, the payment of my vow; for I have shared with you half of the outsides and half of the insides of what I have found." (P. 178 = H. 315)

2. *Paying a social call*

As messenger of the gods and dispenser of Zeus' gifts Hermes is naturally pictured as the god who is supposed to travel around the world and associate with mortals. Already in the third fable above we saw the god adopting a human appearance or appearing in human form. This turns out to be a central theme in the fables on Hermes. Both as a messenger of Zeus and on his own accord, Hermes delights in adopting a human appearance in order to pay a social call. Not only by appearing to them in a dream (once), but by "taking the form of a man" as it is said or implied (thrice) and even by 'moving in with them' (twice). Indeed, also in other sources there is a general emphasis on his role as a *guest,* not to say a *parasitos*, not to say a parasite, in human surroundings.[64]

It should be noted that Hermes never comes *as a god*, always as a man, exposing his divine identity only at the moment of departure. So it was, with some emphasis, already in Homer. At *Il.* 24.334 f. Zeus, having decided to send Hermes to Priamos, addresses him as follows: "Hermes, it is your special pleasure to seek the company of men (ἑταιρίσσαι, lit. to make a man your companion) and you lend your ear to whoever you wish" (Ἑρμεία, σοὶ γάρ τε μάλιστά γε φίλτατόν ἐστιν/ ἀνδρὶ ἑταιρίσσαι, καὶ τ' ἔκλυες ᾧ κ'ἐθέλῃσθα). It is only in the end, after having accompanied and instructed Priamos in the semblance of a young prince, that he reveals his divine identity. This makes his departure necessary, for "it would be unbecoming that mortal men welcome (as hosts) face to face an immortal god" (νεμεσσητὸν δέ κεν

---

[64] There are more gods who visit mortals in a very personal way, especially Herakles and Dionysos. For divine visits to humans see above Ch. I, n. 45; Jameson 1994, 47 nn. 44 f., and below n. 141. On παράσιτος and its semantic shift towards 'parasite' see most recently: C. Damon, Greek Parasites and Roman Patronage, *HSCP* 97 (1995) 181–195; *Neue Pauly* (2000) s.v. parasit. For Hermes as *parasitos*, see below n. 171. Parasites, including Herakles, in Comedy: Wilkins 2000, 71–86.

εἴη ἀθάνατον θεὸν ὧδε βροτοὺς ἀγαπαζέμεν ἄντην [*Il.* 24.463 f.]). The latter word has emphasis: Hermes does pay visits to men but not as a god. Let us keep that in mind. Here are two examples from the fables.

> 11) Wishing to test the prophetic abilities of Teiresias Hermes stole his oxen. Then, *adopting the likeness of a man* (ὁμοιωθεὶς ἀνθρώπῳ), he went to live with Teiresias *as a guest* (ἐπεξενώθη). They went together to the outskirts of the city to find the stolen oxen and Teiresias asked Hermes to report anything that might seem of worthy as an omen. An eagle, flying from the left to the right, was deemed irrelevant but then appeared a black crow looking first upward towards heaven and then downward at the earth. After Hermes had reported this observation Teiresias declared: "Here we have it, this crow is calling heaven and earth to witness that I shall get back my oxen……that is: if you wish it so." (P. 89 = H. 140).[65]
>
> 12) Once two women entertained Hermes (apparently in human form) "in a mean and shabby fashion." As he was about to leave he said: "In me you behold a god, I will give each of you at once whatever you may wish" (*Deum videtis; tribuam vobis protinus quod quaeque optarit*). Of course their wishes are thoughtless and foolish and on being fulfilled reward them for their uncouth behaviour. (Appendix Perottina 4)

We have here the reverse of the visit of Zeus and Hermes—incognito—to Philemon and Baukis, who were rewarded for their hospitable reception of Zeus and Hermes, who paid them a visit in human appearance (above p. 42).

Together these different hermaic themes in the fables mirror recurrent features of the Hymn: first of all Hermes' central role of distributor, more especially as dispenser of "equal portions." The similarity is striking, and the two literary genres—not dissimilar in their airy touch—originated in roughly the same period.[66] This central characteristic of the god may have been elaborated independently in the two literary genres. Nor are the other, more essential, analogies due to chance. Both hymn and fables are experiments that push out frontiers in the

---

[65] O. & R. Temple, *Aesop. The Complete Fables* (Penguin Books 1998) p. 85, comment: "There is much wit in it: beggars used to carry a chough around, hence the verb "to chouch," which means to collect or beg for the chouch and also "to gather"—both referring to Hermes' act in stealing the cattle and also as a subtle insult to Hermes by calling him not a thief but a beggar. But also the cry of the chough in Greek would be rendered *kaph* which is a form of *kap*, meaning retail trader, and knave or cheat. The bird's cry therefore served to identify Hermes to Teiresias."

[66] "Originated," but I am well aware that we have no originals. All our texts are literary adaptations of earlier texts. Cf. above n. 56.

amalgamation of divine and human features in a god's nature. No god is more consistently furnished with human traits than Hermes. It is Hermes' 'human' disposition and demeanour, more than anything else, that provokes a joking relationship between the god and his human companions, including the concomitant discourse and imagery.

Both hymn and fables envisage him as clever but accident-prone, especially in the fable as a victim of misfortune, aggression or well-deserved retaliation. Already in two famous Homeric scenes, directly relevant to our issue, we see Hermes volunteering to be the underdog. In *Il.* 21, after the great gods Ares, Aphrodite, Artemis, Hera, Apollo, and Poseidon have come to blows, Hermes, who was not involved at all, breaks down an aristocratic taboo by telling Leto (498 ff.):

> Do not be afraid Leto, that *I* am going to fight you. People who come to blows with consorts of the Cloud-gathering Zeus seem to have uphill work. No, you can boast to your heart's content and tell the gods that you got the better of me by brute strength.

Likewise in the song of Ares and Aphrodite (*Od.* 8.339 ff.), when Apollo asks his brother whether he would not join Aphrodite even in chains, Hermes answers:

> Would it might be, though thrice as many bonds, bonds numberless, should hold me fast, and all you gods and goddesses should come and see, would I might lie by golden Aphrodite.

These utterances and the mentality they display are of a well nigh Archilochean *anaideia*, glaringly defying the Homeric codes of honour, just as many of the scenes in the hymn and the fables do.[67] Pictured with human weaknesses, Hermes is a willing target for mockery: people mess about with his statues and herms, without ever, on the other hand, detracting from the friendly relationship with their god. In many respects Hermes is pictured as a fellow creature and companion, who may temporarily be the dupe, but who will re-emerge and survive through ingenious manoeuvres and clever tricks. The most human of all gods comments on the human nature of gods in general:

> 13) A man having witnessed a shipwreck claimed that the decrees of the gods were unjust, for to destroy a single impious person they had also made the innocent perish. At the same moment he was bitten by

[67] This, indeed, may be counted as one strong instance of Hermes' function as "symbol of anti-aristocratic faction:" N.U. Brown *o.c.* (above n. 9), 112.

> an ant and while trying to kill it he crushed them all. Then Hermes *appeared* (another appearance) to him, and struck him with his wand saying: "And now do you not admit that the gods judge men in the same way you judge the ants?" (Babrios 117)

So far for the moment hymn and fables. It is about time to recall that Hermes is not only a *human* god, but also a *hungry* god, a feature that will, as I hope to show, lead us to a better insight into the coherence of all these human and divine aspects in one god. Hermes is a playful god, both humorous and somewhat whimsical. He plays with men and—in the form of his statue—generously allows men to play with him. Let us join the game. We shall now cast a glance at the visual representations.

4. Hermes: The Present God in Visual Art

Glancing through the volumes of *LIMC* (*Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*)—if not exhaustive, certainly the most representative collection of divine imagery[68]—the reader soon notes that Hermes in visual art, particularly in the form of a herm, is as conspicuously exceptional among the gods as he was in the hymn and the fables, and, what is more, that the instruments to express his idiosyncrasy are analogous. Far beyond serving as a visual illustration of what we have learned from our earlier readings, the pictures, in their turn, provide independent information, and may receive a running commentary from scattered pieces of literary evidence, which I shall add wherever helpful. In the end, a specific class of images will lead us back to our point of departure: the sacrificial scene in the hymn and the enigma of Hermes' hunger.

For the present occasion we will focus our attention on Hermes in his most popular image, namely the herm.[69] The first thing that strikes the eye is the overwhelming popularity of the herm, even beyond its

---

[68] G. Siebert, Hermès, *LIMC* V (1990) 285–378. Further important literature: Zanker 1965, 91–103, the best treatment of fifth-century vase material though it is short on illustrations. On Hermes in the form of a herm see: Osborne 1985; H. Wrede, *Die antike Herme* (Mainz 1986); Shapiro 1989, 126–132; Furley 1996, 13–28; Parker 1996, 80–83. Rückert 1998 offers an exhaustive treatment, albeit nearly without illustrations. On herms in general: E. Krämer, *Hermen bärtiger Götter. Klassische Vorbilder und Formen der Rezeption* (Münster 2001).

[69] If I restrict myself to this particular statuesque representation of Hermes in vase painting this is because the representations of the god 'in living form' (most frequently

ubiquitous presence[70]—especially in Attica—at the thresholds of private homes and estates,[71] in gardens, in the streets and market places, at the gateways of towns, before (or in) temples[72] and gymnasia, along the side of roadways and at crossroads, at the frontiers of territories and upon tombs, in general as markers of the boundaries of inhabited space.[73] Consequently, it is only natural that these stone pillars have been recovered in large numbers and are lavishly represented as the

---

in the company of Olympian gods) are all of a mythological nature and do not provide information on the issues discussed in the present chapter.

[70] Rückert 1998 provides a full survey of their most common locations and at pp. 42–54 a definitive corroboration of their original *and lasting* central function as markers of borders and spheres of influence, as argued by Fehling, Burkert and others.

[71] M. Jameson, in: O. Murray & S. Price (edd.), *The Greek City from Homer to Alexander* (Oxford 1990) 194, warns us that not all houses could accommodate or afford a herm. However, if more modest private herms have not been recovered in large numbers, this may also be because they may have been of wood. After all Aristophanes *Vesp*. 805 says about the Hekateia that they were ubiquitous at doors and entrances. And there was a close relationship between Hekateia and herms (below n. 166).

[72] Thuc. 6.27.1 πολλοὶ καὶ ἐν ἰδίοις προθύροις καὶ ἐν ἱεροῖς is not entirely clear as to the exact location *in* or *in front of* the temples. See Furley 1996, 13 ff.

[73] I am not concerned here with the herm itself, its origin, its formal development, or the first historical records such as the erection of herms by Hipparchos, the Eion-herm monument. etc. For relevant literature see above n. 68, above all extensively on all these topics: Rückert 1998. On the moral maxims written on the herms of Hipparchos see especially Osborne 1985, 56 f. On the Eion herm monument *ibidem,* 58–64. I accept that the moral maxims on the Hipparchos herms and the praises on those of the Eion monument (not to speak of the "distinctly trite epigrams" mentioned by Furley 1996, 13) may have something to do with the herm as a typical place of communication, either provoked by or giving rise to its quadrangular form. However, the primary function of the Hipparchic herms was to serve as border-, distance- and direction-markers. I am a bit sceptical towards all too sophisticated 'communicative' interpretations, as the one by Osborne, which seems to me an (enticing) instance of "mirrors, not windows" (H.G. Kippenberg, on semiotic approaches to the Gospels, *Numen* 41 [1994] 88). I tend to join Furley's scepticism here (21 and n. 39). On the supposed origin of the herm from the *herma*, pile of rocks: H. Herter, Hermes, Ursprung und Wesen eines griechischen Gottes, *RhM* 119 (1976) 193–241; Burkert 1985, 156; A. Athanassakis, From the Phallic Cairn to Shepherd God and Divine Herald, *Eranos* 87 (1989) 33–49. Some recent views are more sceptical: Siebert in *LIMC*, Furley 1996, 18 f., Osborne 1985, 48, Parker 1996, 82, on account of the etymological problems (ἕρμα does not designate a heap of rocks), and since the trunk was evidently meant to receive inscriptions. I agree with Parker *ibid.* in viewing the otherwise unexplainable phallos (and the laterals—shoulders?) as a strong argument against this modern scepticism. "The best view may be that Hipparchos found Hermes wooden and left him marble" (*ibid.* 83). Concerning the suggested functions of the herm, Furley 1996, 19–20 lists the following generalizations: 1) apotropaeic (Burkert); 2) popular monuments of democracy (Domaszweski; Crome; Aurenche, Osborne); 3) connection with youth (Siebert); and 4) as a bridge between the divine and the human spheres (Furley himself 21). See most recently: Rückert 1998.

first 90 items of the article on Hermes in *LIMC*.[74] More significant, however, is that these herms are also very frequently portrayed in vase paintings,[75] which at least implies that they were not taken for granted as background noise, but served as a meaningful signal, as a marker. The earliest of these vase paintings, like the earliest monumental herms themselves, can be dated to the very same period to which the literary evidence adduced so far belongs: late sixth century.[76] All in all, Hermes boasts pride of place among deities portrayed in vase painting in the form of a statue.[77] Now, in this class of portraits we descry two recurrent features, traces of which we already encountered in the literary sources. They appear to be typical of Hermes.

1. *Socializing*

First, there is the intimate and familiar nature of the various forms of contact with the god (*LIMC* nos. 141–185). Nos. 141–155 present attitudes and gestures expressing intimate conversations with a Hermes statue. In these scenes we often find ephebes, as is natural for the god

---

[74] A discussion of the archaeological material found in Athens: Zanker 1965; Furley 1996, 13–17. The material given by Pausanias is discussed by Pritchett 1998, 121–132 (with recent literature) and cf. *ibid*. 263–273.

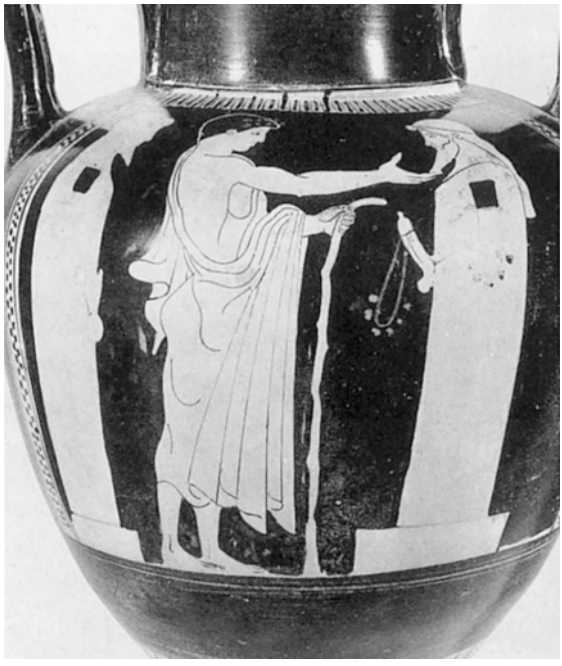
[75] See especially: Shapiro 1989, 126–132; G. Siebert, Un image dans l'image: le pilier hermaïque dans la peinture de vases grecques, in: *L'image et la production du sacré. Actes du coll. de Strasbourg Jan. 1988* (1991) 103–120; Zanker 1965, espec. 91–103. Simon 1985, 308–312 has a section on the vase-scenes of worship before a herm, and Rückert 1998, 185–220, a survey of "Formen der Hermenverehrung—Die Vasenbilder."

[76] See for the herms: E. Harrison, *The Athenian Agora XI. Archaic and Archaistic Sculpture* (1965), 129–134, Rückert 1998, 67–76: "Frühe Hermenweihungen." For the earliest vase-paintings see espec. Zanker 1965, 91–103; Metzger 1965, 77–91 nos. 1–6; Shapiro 1989, 126–132.

[77] On the precise status of the herm *as divine statue* opinions may differ. "Herms are not, of course, identical to figures of Hermes, but they cannot escape Hermes' associations even though they have some peculiar qualities of their own," thus cautiously Osborne 1985, 70 n. 31. Furley 1996, 18, is less circumspect: "The herm was simply the cult image of Hermes." Similarly Simon 1985, 303: "Für die Griechen dagegen war die Herme ein Bild des Gottes." Perhaps the best idea is following J. Mylonopoulos in his Introduction to *idem* 2010, 7: "Herms or Hekataia on the roads were not permanent cult statues, but in those moments that someone went by and addressed a prayer to them, they were indeed temporarily functioning as a cult statue. Thus, rituals defined cult statues and not the other way round." I would suggest that the herm, being both god and block of stone, by its very accessibility and its human traits becomes the place where the god shows himself from his most human side. In my view the remarkable and among gods unique fact that a god is consistently represented in the form of a herm has fundamentally contributed to the formation of his 'character', as discussed in the present chapter.

1

2



With kind permission of Musée d'art et d'archéologie de Laon (France). Photo by Mélanie Demarle. Amphore de Nola, Peintre de Pan, Athènes vers 470 av.J.-C. Col. Paul Marguerite de La Charlonie, inv. 37.1023

3

4

who becomes more and more the patron of gymnastics and agonistics[78] (though in vase paintings only exceptionally indicated as being in the palaestra), and also travellers and the omnipresent satyrs.[79] Particularly interesting are marked gestures of supplication.[80] 1 (no. 153, 470–460 BC) depicts two Herms, one of them (pictured as a young Hermes) approached by a woman who is touching—or at least stretching her hand toward—his face, the other, pictured as a grey haired, aged Hermes, approached by a bearded old men touching his chin in a clear gesture of supplication.[81] 2 (no. 155, 470–460 BC) shows an ephebe standing in between two herms while touching the beard of one of them in the same gesture as in 1; as does a satyr in no. 130.[82] Even more intimate and emotional is 3 (no. 143, late 6th c. BC) showing two herms, toward one of which an ephebe bends over touching him with two hands and apparently whispering something in his ear. Likewise, a girl in 4 (no. 154, 470–460 BC) seizes the herm's 'shoulders', while bending forward as if whispering something to him.[83] Herms are

---

[78] Hermes is the 'Enagonios', who in the words of Pindar *Ol.* 6.79 is the one ὃς ἀγῶνας ἔχει μοῖραν τ' ἀέθλων. On Hermes Enagonios and his relationship with ephebes and the agonistic sphere, see: Rückert 1998, 112–139.

[79] Nos. 130–130bis (c. 470 BC), twice dressed as human citizens, in many other paintings in their natural outfit. On Satyrs in the context of herms: Rückert 1998, 211–214. Generally, the social level of the passers-by seems to be humble: nos. 160, 161 show young persons on horse-back (ephebes?), but 166, 169bis portray hunters, 162 a porter carrying an enormous sack, 163 a fisherman, 164, 165 the god Pan, 168 a pharmakos? (Cl. Bérard, *RA* 1982, 137–150). Paus. 8.32.4 seems to include Hermes (and Herakles) with the two gods Apollo Aguieus and Athena Ergane among the gods who are called ἐργάται. See: Jost 1985, index s.v. dieux ergatai; Pritchett 1998, 169. On "Hermen im Bereich der Sklaven und Handwerker:" Rückert 1998, 214–217. Cf. the many epigrams in the *Anth. Pal.* in which simple people like fishermen, peasants, scribes, and craftsmen at their retirement dedicate their outfits and tools, often explicitly described as worn, dirty and old to (a statue of) Hermes.

[80] On scenes of supplication as expressed by touching the herm: Rückert 1998, 207–210. For some more examples of supplicating gestures in communications with herms see: Jaillard *o.c.* (below n. 123).

[81] For an over-sophisticated 'communicative' interpretation see: Osborne 1985, 54. More convincing, Zanker 1965, 95, who underlines the extent to which Hermes can adapt to his worshipper: each person prays to his own Hermes; there is a Hermes of Youth and one of old Age. Like others, he explains the scene as a prayer for erotic love, for at the reverse side of the vase the same girl appears again: this time between two young men.

[82] Similar gestures, sometimes as expressions of adoration, in nos. 113, 144, 148. Nos. 146, 147, 149 evoke an atmosphere of colloquial communication between man and herm.

[83] All this may have a relationship with the exceptional fact that like the Dionysiac mask, herms are sometimes represented frontally, catching the viewer with his gaze. For the meaning of the frontal gaze in Dionysiac art: F. Frontisi-Ducroux,

sometimes pictured with curiously human traits. "On vase paintings they can seem so animate that one would scarcely be surprised to see one wink," writes Robert Parker; they sometimes express "a monstrous vivid humanity," as Sir John Beazley noted.[84]

Corresponding scenes from literary evidence unequivocally confirm that these vivid scenes of affectionate familiarity and emotional appeal to the amiable god are inspired by images from real life. In literature, Hermes, significantly more than any other god, is approached with the amicable salutation φίλε and comparable forms of personal address. When Hipponax 32 [West] calls on his "Dear Hermes" while he is obviously about to commit some theft, this familiarity may indeed "seem somewhat suspect," as Burkert 1985, 274 notes, adding that, while to be man-loving in general would be beneath the dignity of Zeus, this quality is left for Hermes. In Ar. *Pax* 392—in an admittedly very supplicatory, hence eminently persuasory context—the god is addressed as "O most philanthropic and generous of the gods" (ὦ φιλανθρωπότατε καὶ μεγαλοδωρότατε δαιμόνων).[85] We saw earlier how Hermes in *Il.* 24 is pictured as the god "who likes to make a man his companion." And, indeed, it is in this very role of ἕταιρος that Hermes is depicted both in the vase paintings and in literature, where mortals approach (in the literal sense of that word) the god for advice.

Au miroir du masque, in: *La cité des images: religion et société en Grèce ancienne* (Paris 1984) 146–161; F. Frontisi-Ducroux and J.P. Vernant, Figures du masque en Grèce ancienne, *Journal de Psychologie* (1983) 53–69. Elsewhere, in: Les limites de l'anthropomorphisme. Hermès et Dionysos, *TR* 7 (1986) 193–211, she argues that it was the particular proximity of the two gods that necessitated an emphasis on their divine strangeness and distinction realized by their particular "refus du corps anthropomorphiqe," which I find difficult to accept. "Elegant explanation", thus Parker, 2005, 19 ("mais l'adopte-t-il pour autant?": thus V. Pirenne-Delforge justly suspects his elegant way of disagreeing in *Kernos* 20 [2007] 426). About Hermes' frontality: Osborne 1985, 52 f.

[84] Parker 1996, 81; J.D. Beazley, *The Pan Painter* (Mainz 1974) 5.

[85] "Manipulative flattery pure and simple," thus S.D. Olson, *Aristophanes. Peace* (Oxford 1998), *ad loc*. Hermes' assistance, like his own status, is often of a very simple kind. In *Od.* 15.319 Odysseus says that by the favour of Hermes, to whom the labour of men's hands owes all the grace and the success that it achieves, he is good in doing all kind of simple jobs. Hermes is perhaps referred to here as the patron of all persons of inferior status. See A. Hoekstra in: A. Heubeck & A. Hoekstra, *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey*, vol. II (Oxford 1989) *ad loc.* for parallels. In Aesch. *PV* 942 he is called διάκονος but this comes from the mouth of Prometheus and may be an invective against the servant of the despot Zeus. However, in *Ion* 4 Euripides has Hermes call himself "the gods' servant" (δαιμόνων λάτριν) and in Ar. *Plut.* 1170 he is called the "Servant god." Cf. above n. 79.

In Ar. *Nub*. 1478 f. Strepsiades regrets having rejected the gods and now turns to a herm, saying:

> O dear Hermes (ὦ φίλ' Ἑρμῆ), do not be angry but forgive me for my stupidity [in following the 'atheists' Chairephon and Socrates]. Now become my counsellor (σύμβουλος): shall I persecute them in a process, or tell me whatever you want.

Then he feigns to listen to the herm[86] after which he says: "But this is good advice indeed, that you tell me not to make an official charge but immediately set fire to their houses."

All this, then, is exactly the posture of close companionship pictured in the vase paintings and which is beautifully summarized in an epithet of Hermes, namely *Psithuristes*, the one with whom you communicate in whispers. As, by the way, you do with Aphrodite *Psithuros*.[87] In the latter case the prayers may be expected to belong in the field of love (hence requiring some secrecy); in the case of Hermes dubious wishes referring to theft or deceit may be involved, as another of his well-known epithets (δόλιος) may imply.[88] Yet, there is no need

---

[86] Hermes as a 'living god' himself is represented as having just such a discussion with a statue of Eirene, in Ar. *Pax* 657 ff. Here too the illusion of the speaking statue is realized through the (literally) "hermeneutic" mediation of the one partner who feigns to have heard the answer. On the one hand, a herm is a dumb object of stone (below n. 102). However, as soon as a special perspective requires a herm to speak, it turns into a 'living god' and 'of course' is able to speak. Sometimes this needs a "Daedalic" intervention, as in a dialogue in a fragment of Plato Comicus, Fr. 188 (*PCG* 204) where one person asks: "Who are you, speak quickly, why do you keep silent; don't you speak?" whereupon another answers: "I am Hermes possessing the voice of Daedalos; though made of wood I walk by myself and so have arrived at this place." In a fragment of the Comic author Phrynichos (*PCG* Fr. 61) Daedalos' art is not even required. We witness a discussion, inspired by the Hermocopidae affair, between a person who warns a herm (ὦ φίλταθ' Ἑρμῆ) to take care not to stumble and smash things up, and the Herm answering "I'll take care" (φυλάξομαι). And so we are back at the whispering herm in the *Nubes*, where at 1183 a scholion comments: ὡς τοῦ Ἑρμοῦ ἀνανεύσαντος. On all this see Kassel 1983. And cf. the brilliant discussion on the nature of statues in Gordon 1996.

[87] On this epithet, the evidence and its uses, see: H. Usener, Psithyros, *RhM* 59 (1904) 623; G. Radke, s.v. Psithyristes and Psithyros, *RE* XXIII, 1414–1417. There was a Hermes with these names in Athens as there were an Aphrodite and an Eros. A Heros Psithyros is epigraphically attested for Lindos at Rhodos: *I.Lindos* II no. 484. Cf. Versnel 1981a, 27; L. Soverini, Ψίθυρος: Eros, Aphrodite e i susurro nella Grecia antica, in: S. Alessandri (ed.), *Ἱστορίη. Studi offerti dagli allievi a G. Nenci* (Lecce 1994) 433–460. Good discussion in: Pirenne-Delforge 1994, 46 ff., who suggests that the epithet may be taken as an active form: the god(dess) murmurs her/his answer.

[88] Cf. Paus. 7.27.1, "On the road to Pellene (Achaia) there is an image of Hermes by the wayside: he bears the surname of wily (δόλιος) and is ready to accomplish the prayers of men (εὐχὰς δὲ ἀνθρώπων ἕτοιμος τελέσαι): the image is square and

for being over-suspicious on this point. About a stone herm (λίθου πεποιημένον ἄγαλμα) of Hermes Agoraios with a beard[89] in the centre of the market of Pharai in Achaia, Pausanias 7.22.2. tells us that beside it an oracle is established:

> In front of the image is a hearth (ἑστία) made of stone, with bronze lamps clamped to it with lead. He who would inquire of the god comes at evening and burns incense on the hearth, fills the lamps with oil, lights them, lays a coin of the country called a copper on the altar to the right of the image, and asks his question, whatever it may be, *into the ear of the god*. Then he stops his ears and leaves the market-place; and when he is gone a little way outside, he takes his hands from his ears, and whatever words he hears he regards as an oracle.[90]

This is precisely the humble type of oracle which, according to the hymn, is appropriate for Hermes, and of course not necessarily restricted to questions of a fishy nature.

2. *More burlesques*

Let us turn now to the second pervasive trait in the visual representations, namely the aspect of mild irony or even mockery that is as conspicuous here as it was in the hymn and the fables. First, it may be called to mind that the great majority of the herms are ithyphallic, some of them *ithyphallikotatoi.* The city of Kyllene boasts a statue of Hermes which was nothing but a huge penis[91] and according to some scholars

---

bearded, and has a cap on his head." For δόλιος as a fixed epithet of Hermes see the evidence in Pritchett 1998, 132.

[89] On this epithet and its connotations see below n. 162.

[90] On these oracular and 'speaking' herms see: Herter 1976, 235. F. Graf, Rolling the Dice for an Answer, in: S.I. Johnston & P.T. Struck (edd.), *Mantikê. Studies in Ancient Divination* (Leiden 2005) 51–97, espec. 71–78, notes "that Hermes' oracular power is due to his association with chance and luck rather than to any intrinsic divinatory power," and interestingly connects this type of oracle through 'chance utterances', as at the *agora* of Pharai, with 'dice oracles' as we know them from Asia Minor, also often at the *agora* and in relation to Hermes, and hence also associated with commerce. All this is closely related to Hermes' as personified chance or *tuche*. For the latter see: Eur. *Rh*. 216 ff. On Hermes' oracular faculties: Farnell IV, and V, 23; 28; 73 n. 80. On the dice oracles of Hermes see also: C. Grottanelli, La cléromancie ancienne et le dieu Hermès, in: F. Cordano & C. Grottanelli (edd.), *Sorteggio publico e cleromancia dall'antichità all'età moderna* (Milano 2001). Jaillard 2007, Ch. III: 'Hermès dans le champ de la parole poétique et mantique', focuses on the poetical, 'lyrical', and mnemonic aspects of Hermes' mantic qualities.

[91] Paus. 6.26.5. Cf. Artem. 1.45. Lucian. *Iup. Trag.* 42 says that the Cyllenians offer sacrifice to Phales.

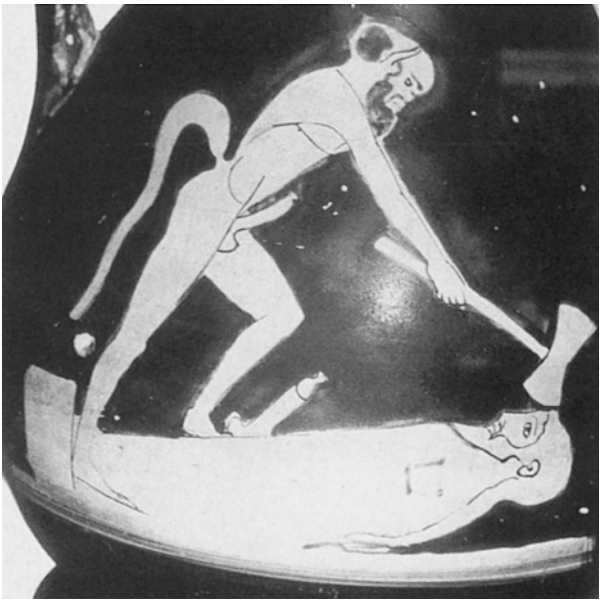
5

6

7

8

9



the god began his life as a phallic cairn.[92] Now, Greeks are reluctant to let such niceties go unnoticed. One painting 5 (no. 94, 470–460 BC) depicts a herm with an inordinate member on which a bird alights while at the same time kissing the god on the lips (homoerotic?),[93] others display objects suspended on the phallus (no. 151, early 4th c. BC: a round object—small vase, a sac?;[94] 2 (no. 155) a garland). And as to 6 (no. 130bis, c. 470 BC), I am not at all sure where the bough handed to a herm by a satyr dressed up as a travelling citizen is going to land. In no. 156 an acolyte of sacrifice passes by a herm and touches his sex.[95] The Hermokopidae, of course, pushed the phallic joking to its frontiers (or beyond), at least *if* this was the body-part they amputated, an option that, in my view, can hardly be doubted.[96]

There is yet another series of pictures in which derisive overtones may be detected. It concerns a group of paintings (nos. 170–184) in which herms are being manipulated and even messed around during the process of fabrication, transport, or installation. The finest, also the earliest herm attested on a vase, is 7 (no. 170, 520–510 BC): the well-known picture of a sculptor fabricating a herm, painted in the interior of a cup by Epiktetos and carrying the inscription *Hiparchos kalos*.[97] There are three later gems with similar pictures (nos. 176, 177, 178). Other paintings (no. 171, 440–430 BC; 8 [no. 172, 480–470 BC]) show a satyr carrying or placing—or pinching?—a herm. Most curious is the god Hermes himself carrying a herm on a chariot drawn by four Panes

---

[92] See on questions of origin and function of the hermaic phallos: Rückert 1998, 42–54.

[93] In Callim. 7th *Iambe* (fr. 199) a pederast asks a herm in the Palaestra if his ithyphallic condition may have been triggered by his love for the questioner's own *eromenos* Philetadas. A comparable emphasis on a herm's pederastic preferences also *Anth. Pal.* XII 143.

[94] Not depicted in *LIMC*. See: Metzger 1965, 84 no. 24 pl. 30,2.

[95] Is it by mere accident that two scenes of a *gynaikeion* (nos. 158 and 159, both mid 4th c. BC) display the singular presence of *non*-ithyphallic herms?

[96] Ar. *Lys.* 1093 f.; Phrynichos Fr. 58.

[97] Osborne 1985, 49. Cf. *Anth. Pal.* XVI 191, where a Hermes statue admits that he is only made of clay on a potter's wheel. A proverb displays a pun on an unfortunate result of a failed process of fabrication: Ζητῶν Ἑρμῆν γλύψαι κέρκοπα ἔγλυψα ("While I set out to carve a Hermes, the final product turned out to be an ape," *Paroem. Gr.* II, p. 228 no. 4). Slightly different but with the same negative connotation the Hermes Perpheraios in Callim. 7th *Iambus* (fr. 197, 2–3) modestly admits to be only a "parergon" of the wooden horse made by Epeios (which itself cannot possibly be proud of its epithet φυγαίχμας!).

(no. 174, an Italiotic situla).[98] Last but not least, a less innocent scene: 9 (no. 179, 470–460 BC), a Satyr is standing on top of a herm which is lying on the ground and hits his head with a double axe. While formally it has some resemblance with well-known *anodos*-scenes,[99] it rather reminds me of the fable in which the splitting of the head of a Hermes statue yielded rich profit. But neither should we rule out that an attack of penis envy may be involved.[100]

In many of these pictures—there are more of the kind[101]—it is as if Hermes, in the helpless form of a 'dismembered'—hence immobile—quadrangular herm,[102] is exposed as being left to the tender mercies of humans, just as we shall see him as dependent on their good graces in a later section. In this shape Hermes is revealed as man's creation, in need of man's assistance at least as much as man is in need of his help. No other god matches this precarious status: man-handling of statues of gods in vase painting (and the fable) seems to be uniquely restricted to the god of the herms.[103]

This consistent feature of at best an over-familiar and at worst a disrespectful treatment of herms strikingly mirrors the playful and mocking scenes concerning statues of Hermes in the fables. And there are other ironical expressions in different types of evidence. An inscription from Chios mentions the theft of an image of Hermes:

---

[98] This vase, still unpublished, was first mentioned by K. Schauenburg, in: U. Höckmann & A. Krug (edd.), *Festschrift für F. Brommer* (Mainz 1976) 247 n. 3. I know of only one (literary) parallel of such an enigmatic image: Soph. Fr. 452, where the gods are seen leaving the city of Troy carrying their own *xoana* on their shoulders, knowing that the city has been taken.

[99] Cl. Bérard, Une nouvelle péliké du peintre de Géras, *AntK* 9 (1966) 93–100, where he also compares it with an Attic rf. amphora *ARV* 647/18 of the Oinokles painter, picturing Herakles hacking at a lying pillar. Cf. *idem*, *Anodoi. Essai sur l'imagerie des passages chthoniens* (Neuchâtel 1974) 75–87.

[100] For the comical 'meaning' of the sexually aroused Satyr see, besides the earlier works of F. Lissarague, now also G. Hedreen, "I Let Go My Force Just Touching Her Hair": Male Sexuality in Athenian Vase-Paintings of Silens and Iambic Poetry, *ClAnt* 25 (2006) 277–325, who argues that it all concerns "the laughter of one made to see himself in their behavior."

[101] Cf. in particular a Pelike in Compiegne, Metzger 1965, no. 1 Pl. 30.1: in a menacing gesture a Satyr holds a club before a herm.

[102] We should not forget that, in the words of A. Otto, *Die Sprichwörter und sprichwörtlichen Redensarten der Griechen* (Leipzig 1890) s.v. herma, "Die Herme gilt, wie der Stein überhaupt, als Bild stupider Unthätigkeit," referring to Juven. 8.52 and Apoll. Sidon. *ep*. 4.12.3.

[103] As Folkert van Straten kindly informs me. Of course mythical scenes of carrying the palladion (or Artemis' Taurian statue) are of a different type altogether.

> Who pinched Hermes the Thief? Hot-headed [recklessly daring] is the thief who took away the Lord of the Thieves (Ἑρμῆν τὸν κλέπτην τίς ὑφείλετο; θερμὸς ὁ κλέπτης ὃς τῶν φιλητέων ᾤχετ' ἄνακτα φέρων).[104]

Why do we find Hermes in particular as a typical target and dupe in various types of evidence?[105] We shall return to this question,[106] but must first turn our attention to a final interesting feature of the Hermaic representations: the herm in a sacrificial context.

Herms and sacrifice

There are quite a number of vase paintings showing Hermes himself bringing a libation or otherwise involved in a sacrificial act. Here, of course, he is pictured in 'human' form, as are all other gods when pictured as involved in sacrificial activities.[107] *LIMC* V gives a full survey,[108] which sufficiently reconfirms Hermes' involvement, often as an assistant, in sacrificial ceremonies: "Hermes ist Opferdiener κατ' ἐξοχήν,"

---

[104] *CIG* 2229; *E.G.* 1108. Eur. *Rh* 217 Ἑρμῆς, ὅς γε φιλητῶν ἄναξ, has the same expression. On stolen statues of gods see: Pritchett 1998, 232 f.; A. Chaniotis, No Way to Treat a Statue! Emotional Responses to Images, in A. Chaniotis (ed.), *Unveiling Emotions: Sources and Methods for the Study of Emotions in the Greek World* (forthcoming 2011), nos. 37/38. *Anth. Gr.* XI, 176 has a beautiful parallel of a person stealing a Hermes statue where the thief concludes: "Many pupils surpass their masters."

[105] Of course, as especially Aristophanes shows, authors could go to great length in playing with gods without giving offence. However, "there are limits, even for Aristophanes: no essential levity touches the Maiden of the Acropolis or Demeter. (.....) Elsewhere the Athenians could take offence, and that not only at things which stirred them as deeply as did the mutilation of the Hermae and the supposed parody of the Eleusinian mysteries" (Nock, *Essays* II 543).

[106] And, for the moment, n. 102 above.

[107] E. Simon, *Opfernde Götter* (Berlin 1953) has collected the evidence for the great gods, *not* including Hermes. Cf. A.F. Laurens, La libation: intégration des dieux dans le rituel humain? *Image et rituel en Grèce ancienne. Recherches et documents du Centre Thomas More,* 48 (1985) 35–59; F. Lissarague, La libation: essai de mise au point, *ibid.* 3–16; Veyne *o.c.* (above Ch. III n. 78). Recently, K.C. Patton, *Religion of the Gods: Ritual, Paradox, and Reflexivity* (Oxford 2009) studies sacrificing gods in ancient Greece from a comparative perspective and proposes the new category of "divine reflexivity." Divinely performed ritual is a self-reflexive, self-expressive action that signals the origin of ritual in the divine and not the human realm. Above all, divine ritual is generative, both instigating and inspiring human religious activity.

[108] Hermes bringing a libation alone (nos. 801–806); Hermes offering a libation to another god (nos. 807–808); Hermes as an assistant in a sacrificial scene (nos. 809–815); Hermes presenting or receiving a sacrifice (nos. 816–819); Hermes sacrificing a billy-goat (819bis). Farnell, vol. V, 1909, 36 f. already emphasized their importance for the nature of the god. Cf. Zanker 1965, 33–34.

thus Erika Simon.[109] In one of these scenes he once more betrays his wily nature. 10 (no. 820, c. 500 BC) shows the god approaching an altar with a sacrificial victim, a formidable pig. On closer view, however, the animal turns out to be a dog disguised as a pig.[110] Once more the god is trying to cheat a divine colleague, this time by presenting a dog in the guise of a real sacrificial animal. I like to think that this is the dog that had threatened to foul his herm in the fable no. 5 cited above, unaware of Hermes' fixed epithet "dog-slayer."[111]

Interesting though these pictures may be, we must continue our search for herms in vase painting. Fifth-century vase paintings frequently depict the herm standing beside an altar; human worshippers either sacrifice on this altar, or pray to Hermes (as we have seen), or perform other ritual acts like playing the flute or offering a libation. *LIMC* 92–123 provides a list of 33 images of a herm at an altar.[112] Four of them (nos. 100, 101, 102, 102bis) represent a sacrificial procession, two of them, including 11 (102bis, late 5th c.) leading an animal towards the herm; one (no. 103) is a nuptial procession passing by a herm, four (nos. 104–107) present a libation, while ten (nos. 108–117) picture offerings of various objects such as wreaths, twigs, plates of fruit. Finally, six (nos. 118–123) present the sacrificial scene, all of them displaying the most popular part of the 'post-kill' situation: the roasting of the *splanchna* skewered on spits and held in or near the fire by the *splanchnoptes*,[113] often accompanied by a bearer of the *kanoun* as in 12 (no. 121, 420–410 BC). Curiously, however, eight images (nos. 92–99) show a herm standing before an altar (once a *louterion*, and once in a *naiskos* without an altar) without any sacrificial activity or attending person, as in 13 (no. 92, 480–470 BC).[114] Also the scenes of

[109] *oc.* (above n. 107), 94 n. 2.

[110] As demonstrated by F. Studniczka, *JDAI* 6 (1891) 258–269.

[111] For which see: M. West, *Hesiod. Works and Days,* Excursus I 368 f., following J. Chittenden & Rhys Carpenter, in *AJA* 52 (1948) 24–28 and *AJA* 50 (1950) 177–180, respectively.

[112] See also literature mentioned above n. 75. Van Straten 1995, 27–30, adds a few more, and cf. Furley 1996, 21 f. On Hermes in a sacrificial context also Rückert 1998, 189–199, whose interpretation I will not always follow. More recently see also Jaillard *o.c.* (below n. 123).

[113] On this functionary and his tasks: Peirce 1993, 239–241; Robertson 1999.

[114] "In the second quarter of the fifth century many vases show herms alone, without worshippers and with the only context given by an altar or a plaque in the background," thus Zanker 1965, 98–103.

individual worship of a herm without sacrifice that we discussed above regularly depict the herm beside an altar.[115]

Archaeologists of earlier generations generally regarded the sacred paraphernalia shown with herms on vase-paintings as indicative of a sacred precinct of Hermes himself.[116] More recently, however, scholars tend to agree that the altars and temple entrances shown with herms on vase-paintings may in fact show the herm set up beside *another god's* altar or sanctuary.[117] The position of these altars is often localized outside a sanctuary as shown by the addition of columns, trees, and boukrania of votive offerings and as Furley aptly notes, not all the herms in Athens stood outside sanctuaries of Hermes. Van Straten 1995, 28, who deliberately entitles the relevant section of his book "Sacrifices *at* herms" (not *to* or *for* herms), concludes (28):

> It follows from the above that the presence of a herm in a sacrificial scene may mean no more than a rather general indication of the setting: a sacrifice in some sanctuary (for herms could be encountered in any sanctuary), or if we think of the herms at the doors of the private houses, a domestic sacrificial ceremony.[118]

Perhaps we can be a bit more explicit about this. There is a curious paradox in Hermes' cultic existence: although he is one of the most popular and often-mentioned deities of the Greek world, hardly any official (*polis*-)cult and cult-place of the god is known. The very few sanctuaries mentioned for him were predominantly located in Arcadia, the likely

---

[115] Zanker 1965, 93.

[116] So, for instance, Simon 1985, 294. This seems also to be the view of Rückert 1998, 189–199, as for instance in the following: "Hermes ist als Empfänger des Opfers 'persönlich' anwesend. Doch auch sein Kultbild, der 'irdische' Vertreter des Göttes, darf hier nicht fehlen."

[117] So Furley 1996, 23, who connects it with his main thesis that "his function in this position would be to mediate between the worshipper standing outside the sanctuary and sacrificing at the altar there, and the god inside." Cf. Siebert *LIMC* V 1, 377: "Rien n'autorise à identifier un sanctuaire d'H. lui-même chaque fois que son monument jouxte un autel ou se trouve associé à une cérémonie sacrée." On herms at entrances of other gods' temples also: Chr.A. Faraone, *Talismans and Trojan Horses. Guardian Statues in Ancient Greek Myth and Ritual* (New-York – Oxford 1992) 8, with epigraphical evidence.

[118] *Ibid.* 138 on the 'post-kill' sacrificial scenes: "herms are again in the majority, presumably with the same vague implication. Some, however, have additional characteristics, which, to the contemporary public, may have been recognizable as belonging to specific sanctuaries."

region of his origins, and may not have all been temples.[119] Hardly any festival celebrated in his name is known,[120] apart from the ubiquitous Hermaia, which, however, were basically *agones* for boys.[121] In Athens, as far as we know, Hermes had no temple and no festival, apart again from his cult in the palaestra, the Hermaia,[122] which is of later origin. The fact is generally acknowledged in the well-known textbooks, but, curiously, it is rarely if ever realized that without a temple or a cult-festival an official Olympian sacrifice is not to be expected either.

So if Hermes is unique in that we have no knowledge of any regular sanctuary of the god at all in Athens, and since we do know that herms were indeed stereotyped residents in or in front of the sanctuaries of

---

[119] The 'temple' for instance on the summit of Mount Kyllene, mentioned by Paus. 8.17.2, is most probably a cave. For Arcadian Hermes cults, see Jost 1985, index s.v. Hermes.

[120] G.B. Hussey, The Distribution of Hellenic Temples, *AJA* 6 (1890) 59–64, whose paper aims at "measuring the reverence paid to each Greek divinity by means of the number of temples dedicated to his worship," concludes that "Hermes…is very rare." He boasts the 16th place in frequency and is only followed by Pan, Kore (not combined with Demeter), Ares, Plouton, Moirai, and Ge. Nilsson 1906, 388, "Mit dem Kulte des Hermes steht es eigentümlich. Er ist ein grosser Gott und ein allgemein verehrter Gott, in Bild und Lied tausendmal dargestellt. Dennoch hat er wenige Tempel und wenige Feste. Die uns bekannten Tempel können an den Fingern der einen Hand hergezählt werden (Pheneos, Korinth, zwei in Tanagra, Halikarnassos [for which see: *ibid.* 392 ff.], die Feste auch, wenn man die Agone und ganz besonders die späteren, in fast jedem Gymnasium eingerichteten Hermaia in Abzug bringt." On the central role of the Hermes cult in the Hellenistic gymnasia see: S. Aneziri & D. Damaskos, Städtische Kulte im hellenistischen Gymnasion, in: D. Kah & P. Scholz (edd.), *Das hellenistische Gymnasion* (Berlin 2004) 247–271. Nilsson *GGR* I, 501 ff., gives a clear survey of Hermes' scarce temples and festivals. This, of course, is not to say that Hermes did not receive local cults at his herms, statues, sacred places, rural sanctuaries. There is a long list of these in Farnell vol. V, 1909, 74 ff. (Rituals and Festivals); 76–84 (Geographical Register of Hermes-Cults). An even longer one in Eitrem, art. Hermes, *RE* VIII, 738–755. Rückert 1998, under 'Hermenheiligtümer' (185–189) discusses only rural cult places for Hermes (so-called Hermaia) and does not mention temples. Mentions of sacrifices in cult calendars or other cult inscriptions do not prove the existence of a temple. Cf. more recently: J. Larson, Handmaidens of Artemis? *ClJ* 92 (1997) 249–257, espec. 257.

[121] See a list of localities in Johnston 2003 n. 25. At Kydonia (Crete) and Samos connected with rites of licence and reversal. See: 'Hermaia', in *RE* VII, 708–9. How to imagine the structure and organisation of such a festival is best illustrated in detail by the relevant passage in the gymnasiarchic law of Beroia, as re-edited and commented on by Ph. Gauthier & M.B. Hatzopoulos, *La loi gymnasiarchique de Béroia* (Athens 1993) ll. 45–84.

[122] Deubner 1932 has nothing on Hermes except the reference to the local Hermaia: "ein Turnfest." Athenian Hermaia typical of the palaestra: Pl. *Lys* 206d and schol. p. 293; Aeschin. 1.10; *IG* II^2 1227, 7. Paus. 1.27.1 mentions a wooden statue of Hermes in the temple of Polias on the Acropolis. See: Pritchett 1998, 263.

other gods, the conclusion becomes ever more compelling that the sacrificial rituals involving animal victims depicted in the paintings either belong to domestic cult—but is that worthy enough a subject for such a considerable number of vase paintings?—or are *not* on his behalf.[123] Hermes, as a herm, is simply there, gazing and witnessing the offering of god's portions—namely the parts that are burned in the fire: *mêria* (thighbones wrapped in fat); the *osphys* (the sacrum plus the tail)—, *and* the preparation of the human's portions—namely the *splanchna* (heart, lungs, liver, spleen, kidneys [Arist. *Part.an*.665a–672b], what the modern Greek calls *kokoretsi*), *neither of which seems to be intended for his watering mouth*. The mere idea makes one hungry. So this is a timely reminder that we need to return to our point of departure: hungry Hermes.

5. Hungry Hermes: The Sacrificial Meal[124]

Will, then, our poor divine *hetairos* remain utterly deprived of anything decent to 'gobble up'? I am not the first to worry about the

[123] On the basis of a more complete collection of images, D. Jaillard, Le pillier hermaique dans l'espace sacrificiel, *MEFRA* 113 (2001) 341–363, too, argues that the herms in the sacrificial scenes are not intended as the addressees of the sacrifice and interprets their function as mediating between mortals and the gods and as 'organizers' of the whole procedure. I refer the reader to this article for further information. Note especially the several scenes in which the herm is approached by the adorant with a gesture of supplication (hand at the beard as in our figs. 1 and 2) and the Pelike from Boston *LIMC* 171, 440–430, where a servant heaves a herm (comparable with fig. 8 above) onto the pedestal of the altar.

[124] On divine and human culinary aspects of the sacrificial materials there is an abundant literature. Still fundamental is P. Stengel, *Opferbraüche der Griechen* (Leipzig 1910). No less fundamental, in fact indispensable, are two recent studies. First, the chapter 'Post-Kill' in Van Straten 1995, 131 ff. (Cf. *idem,* The God's Portion in Greek Sacrificial Representations: Is the Tail doing Nicely?, in: Hägg 1988, 51–68). Secondly, the systematic discussion by Ekroth 2008. Cf. also J. Bertiaume, *Les rôles du mageiros. Étude sur la boucherie, la cuisine et le sacrice dans la Grèce ancienne* (Leiden 1982) and the survey in *ThesCRA* I, 59–134. On the performative aspect, brief but informative: Jameson 1999. On ethological, social and evolutionary aspects: B. Gladigow, Die Teilung des Opfers. Zur Interpretation von Opfern in vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Epochen, *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 18 (1984) 19–43, espec. 41 ff.; G.J. Baudy, Hierarchie oder: Die Verteilung des Fleisches, in: B. Gladigow & H.G. Kippenberg (edd.), *Neue Ansätze in der Religionswissenschaft* (Munich 1983) 131–174. The idea of priests or private people receiving and eating the parts that the gods have left after having 'partaken of' the sacrificial food is widely thematized in ancient NE culture. See ample bibliography in: Auffarth 1994a, 61 f. and more recently St.M. Maul, *Den Gott ernähren*. Überlegungen zum regelmässigen Opfer in altorientalischen Tempeln, in: Stavrianopoulou 2008, 75–86.

appetite of the god and the different kinds of diets assigned to or withheld from him. It is impossible within the scope of this chapter to thoroughly discuss the whole complex but I will single out a few of the most interesting and to my mind most relevant data. First of all, I consciously used the expression 'to gobble up', because Greek verbs with this meaning or connotation are consistently used for Hermes in connection with the partaking of food, more especially sacrificial food. It is also the way Hermes' craving for meat was referred to in the hymn: κρειῶν ἐρατίζων, 'hankering after meat', which he desired to—but did not—'gulp down' (καί τε μάλ' ἱμείροντι περᾶν ἱερῆς κατὰ δειρῆς 133).

1. *"The warm* splanchna *which I used to gobble up"*

Let us begin with a vexed problem concerning the *splanchna*.[125] In contradistinction to the gods' parts which were burned on the altar, these innards, being the most popular humans' portion, were roasted, distributed among those participating in the sacrifice, and immediately consumed on the spot, while still warm. However, two passages in Aristophanes, both picturing the effects of a 'sacrificial strike'[126] seem to intimate that not only human participants but also the gods had their share of the *splanchna*.

In the *Birds* (Ar. *Av*. 1515–1520) we read how, since the city in the clouds was built, the gods' portions of the sacrifices can no longer reach the gods, because the *knise* from the *mêria* (κνῖσα μηρίων ἄπο 1517) does not rise to the skies anymore. The *barbarian* gods, screeching like Illyrians in their deprivation, threaten to march on Zeus unless he gets the markets (lit. trading posts: τὰ ἐμπόρια) reopened and the sliced *splanchna* (σπλάγχνα κατατετμημένα) introduced again.[127]

---

[125] See most recently: Ekroth 2008, 93–95, with earlier literature in n. 33.

[126] Auffarth 1994a presents a fundamental treatment of this phenomenon, including the passages under discussion here. Cf. also *idem*, Braucht Gott ein Opfer? Opferpraxis und Opferkritik in der griechischen Religionsgeschichte, in: D. Neuhaus (ed.), *Das Opfer. religionsgeschichtliche, theologische und politische Aspekte* (Frankfurt a. M. 1998) 11–32, esp. 22 f.; N.J. Richardson comm. *Hymn to Demeter* 305 ff.

[127] The allusion is to the well-known relation between Greek colonists and the native population, who would withdraw inland but would make occasional attacks on the incomers in their trading posts (ἐμπόρια). See Dunbar *ad loc.* On *emporion* see: M.H. Hansen, Emporion. A Study on the Use and Meaning of the Term in the Archaic and Classical Periods, in: Th.H. Nielsen (ed.), *Yet More Studies in the Ancient Greek Polis* (Historia Einzelschr. 117, Stuttgart 1997) 83–105; E.K. Petropoulos, *Hellenic Colonization in Euxeinos Pontos. Penetration, Early Establishment and the Problem of the "Emporion" Revisited* (Oxford 2005).

In a somewhat similar situation in the *Plutus,* Hermes complains that "nobody offers frankincense anymore, nor laurel, nor barley cakes, no animal victim, nothing at all to us, the gods" (οὐδεὶς οὐ λιβανωτόν, οὐ δάφνην, οὐ ψαιστόν, οὐχ ἱερεῖον, οὐκ ἄλλ' οὐδὲ ἓν ἡμῖν ἔτι θύει τοῖς θεοῖς, 1114 f.). He goes on lamenting: "Now, I don't care about the other gods, but I myself am starved to death," listing all good fare he is now missing: "the goodies I got from barmaids from early dawn: wine cake, honey, dried figs, the titbits Hermes likes to eat" (ὅσ' εἰκός ἐστιν Ἑρμῆν ἐσθίειν, 1123). "But now I am starving." (……) "Oh the good cheese cakes I received at my month day."[128] "Grief for the ham that I used to gobble up" (οἴμοι δὲ κωλῆς ἣν ἐγὼ κατήσθιον, 1128). Then follows the final item of the list: "And for the warm innards (*splanchna*) which I used to gobble up" (σπλάγχνων τε θερμῶν ὧν ἐγὼ κατήσθιον, 1130);[129] "woe for the wine cup with the equal mix of wine and water" (1132).

From these two passages it has been extrapolated that generally "the god to whom the sacrifice was offered received a portion of the *splanchna* as well."[130] In my view, however, the contexts do not tolerate such an inference since both refer to exceptional gods interested in an exceptional menu. In the first passage a clear distinction is drawn between 'normal' Greek Olympian gods feeding on (that is sniffing) *knise*,[131] and barbarian gods enjoying a different diet, namely

---

[128] The fourth day of the month (*H.Hermes* 19), on which the god received cakes: Schol. *a.l.*; Theophr. *Char.* 16.10.

[129] The verb is often used for the way animals wolf down their food, and always implies greediness.

[130] Van Straten 132. So, too, Dunbar comm. *Aves*, *ad* 518 f. and 1520 ff. also referring to *Plut.* 1128 ff. The same also in Olson *ad Pax* 1140 and Ekroth 2008, 93 n. 37. Furley 1996, 26, on "the thighbones, the innards and the wine", writes: "these were the normal ingredients of an Olympian sacrifice (…). I suspect a joke behind the reference to herms gobbling down such sumptuous offerings: they may not have been meant for Hermes; rather as the thieving messenger god, he pilfered them from their rightful recipient en route." Although I, too, will argue that there is a pun intended, it cannot be the one Furley proposes, since at least the two edible ingredients are not the gods' but the humans' portion. Ekroth 2008, 94, rightly assumes that, *if* gods participated in the 'consumption' of *splanchna during* the actual *thusia*, this, too, was in the form of *knise* from the *splanchna* that were burnt together with the *mêria* as a gift to the gods. For *splanchna* as part of the *trapezomata* see below.

[131] Despite all satirical puns on 'smoke' as an offering there cannot be any doubt that the *knise* rising from the burnt *mêria* was generally understood as the god's portion *par excellence*. The earliest testimony in Hom. *Il.* 22.170f.; cf. Plato *Euthyphron* 14 BD. Grottanelli 1988, 23–27. J.N. Bremmer, Modi di communicazione con il divino: la preghiera, la divinizzazione e il sacrificio nella civiltà greca, in S. Settis (ed.), *I Greci* I

splanchna, which even barbarian gods do not sniff but munch. The explicit emphasis is on their non-Greek identity—they are called Triballoi, a proverbially savage tribe,[132] a few lines later—*and* behaviour. They do not keep to the Olympian dinner-codes, preferring *splanchna* (the humans' portion) over *knise*.

The very same is true for Hermes in the second passage, and the method is analogous. Hermes first complains that nobody brings any sacrifice to the gods, listing as we have seen: no incense, no bay, no barley cake, no victim (ἱερεῖον) (1114 ff.). All of these are indeed regular burnt offerings, the first and last offered by the well-to-do, the second and third by the poor.[133] However, Hermes himself "*does not care about (the meals of) the other gods,*" but about his own favourite dishes. And these are of a conspicuously different nature: without exception they consist of all kinds of titbits typical of *human* diets. The goodies from the barmaids are the customary small gifts placed at the herms,[134] and so were the 'month-day' cakes. The ham (named κωλή, thighbone with a good deal of flesh still on it), as opposed to the μηρία/μηρός, the *bare* thighbones[135] (which are the god's portion),

---

(Turin, 1996) 239–83, espec. 270; Ekroth 2008, 88 ff. The essential position of the creation of smoke is evident from the verb *thyein*, whose original meaning is 'to burn'.

[132] T. Long, *Barbarians in Greek Comedy* (Carbondale and Edwardsville 1986) 134 ff. On their language in Ar. *Aves* 1615 f.; 1628 f.; 1678–1681: St. Colvin, *Dialect in Aristophanes and the Politics of Language in Ancient Greek Literature* (Oxford 1999) 289 f.

[133] Cf. on the connotation of stinginess of offerings such as cakes: Men. *Dys.* 450 and more testimonia in Gomme-Sandbach comm. *ad loc*. Cf. Wilkins 2000, 304–311, who, however, warns that cakes can also be viewed as a token of luxury. On bread as (part of) gifts to the gods: J. Haussleiter, 'Brot', in: *RAC* 2 (1954) 611–630. In the context of minor sacrificial gifts in Roman religion: Chr. Auffarth, Teure Ideologie—billige Praxis. Die "kleinen" Opfer in der römischen Kaiserzeit, in: Stavrianopoulou 2008, 147–170, espec. 152 f.

[134] See below pp. 364–367.

[135] Van Straten 1995, 123 ff.; 155. Found in massive concentrations at sacred places: Bremmer 1994, 51 n. 21; Ph. Columeau, Sacrifice et distribution de la viande dans les sanctuaires grecs et chypriotes, du VII^{e} s. au 1er s. av. J.-C., d'après les vestiges osseux, *Pallas* 52 (2000) 147–166; Ekroth 2008, 87 n. 1; *eadem*, Thighs or Tails? The Osteological Evidence as a Source for Greek Ritual Norms, in: Brulé 2009, 125–151, on *meria* and *osphys* as god's parts. The Comicus Pherekrates even makes a god complain that men give only the completely barren bones to the gods and the poorness of the god's part is a ready target of comic puns. These *meria* would not have been very attractive for Hermes to gobble up. With only one exception (see below n. 137) Aristophanes is consistent in referring to the thighbones in their function as gods' portions as μηρία, never as κωλαί. So here, too, κωλή cannot be the gods' part. In other authors the distinction between the two terms is not always consistent: e.g. Aesch. *PV* 496; Ameipsias as quoted by van Straten 1995, 154 n. 132. G. Berthiaume, L'aile ou les mêria, in

mentioned as one of Hermes' favourite dishes, was a portion regularly set aside for the priest after a sacrifice.[136] How deliberately the poet is alluding to Hermes' singularly 'human' appetite throughout this whole passage is demonstrated in lines 1136 f. where the starving god asks for bread to 'gobble down' and a "piece of the meat of the sacrifice you are bringing inside the house"[137] and gets as an answer the ritual prescription well-known from *leges sacrae* ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐκφορά ('export forbidden'/'no take away').[138] Here, then, Hermes is pictured as acting in full compliance with human lines of conduct in sacrificial ritual.

The conclusion must be that the expression σπλάγχνων τε θερμῶν ὧν ἐγὼ κατήσθιον from the mouth of Hermes among this accumulation of references to human consumption in a sacrificial context must refer to the conventional imagery of *splanchna* as the humans' por-

---

Georgoudi 2005, espec. 244–249, revives the discussion whether μηρία can also mean thighbones *with* their meat (= κωλαί) and argues that in some testimonia the gods were regaled with the latter variant. However, the very few texts which seem to say as much are at most exceptions that prove the rule (Men. *Dysc.* 447–453 has no probative value at all). Moreover, see the perfect division between men's and gods' parts in a *lex sacra* from Phrearrioi which has in l.5 [ἱερεώσ]υνα κωλὴν πλευρὸν ἰ<σ>χ[ίον.....] and in ll. 15/16: ἐπὶ δὲ τοὺς βωμοὺς[.....] μηροὺς μασχαλίσματα ἡμίκραιρ[αν..... See for this text, discussion and full literature: *NGSL* no. 3, pp. 159–170. Cf. also the following footnotes.

[136] Van Straten 1995, 154 f.: the *trapezomata*, i.e. the offerings placed on the holy table would normally fall to the priest. The parts of the victim most frequently included are a ham or a leg, the head or half of it, portions of *splanchna* and meat, and, above all, the skin. In addition to parts of the victim the priests regularly received sacrificial cakes of every conceivable description, which also would first have been placed on the holy table. For literature on details see *ibid.* n. 133 and 135. Cf. also Jameson 1994, 37 and 56 n. 83. B. Le Guen-Pollet in: R. Étienne & M.-Th. Le Dinahet (edd.), *L'espace sacrificiel dans les civilisations méditerranéennes de l'Antiquité. Actes Colloque Lyon 1988* (Paris 1991) 13–23, has collected the portions assigned to the priests in inscriptions: σπλάγχνα, δέρμα, σκέλος, κωλή, ὦμος, πλάτη, βραχίων, πρότμησις, τρίπλευρον, πλευρόν, ὀσφύς, κεφαλή, ἐγκέφαλος, ῥύχνος, διμοιρία, δίκρεας, δεισίας. R. Osborne, Women and Sacrifice in Classical Greece, *CQ* 43 (1993) 392–405, also in: R. Buxton (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion* (Oxford 2000) 294–313, espec. 308 with n. 44, emphasizes that female priests as well as the women who made the sacrifice shared in the roasted viscera.

[137] This is closely similar to Trygaios' behaviour in Ar. *Pax* 1021 ff., where he, too, wants the animal to be sacrificed indoors and orders that the thighbones be brought to him personally outside. This is the only time that Aristophanes uses the word μηρία instead of κωλή.

[138] See the good note by Van Leeuwen *ad. loc.*, who mentions two testimonia in other authors who use this expression as a comic pun. More common are οὐ φορά and οὐκ ἀποφορά. M.S. Goldstein, *The Setting of a Ritual: Meal in Greek Sanctuaries 600–300 BC.* (Ph. Diss. Berkeley 1978) 322–355, provides a full collection of all the οὐ φορά texts. Cf. S. Scullion, Olympian and Chthonian, *Class. Ant.* 13 (1994) 75–119, espec. 99–112.

tion as well. Hermes is here seen in the rôle of a human participant in a sacrificial context, who as distinct from the other gods is only interested in 'gobbling down' sacrificial portions "while still warm." The mere wording of this line, in addition to contextual arguments, should have warned commentators against adducing it as a testimony that gods, too, may partake in the consumption of *splanchna*.

This is not to say that this idea should never have emerged in literature or practice. For, as Ekroth 2008, 93 says: "There are elements which negotiate the distance between gods and men expressed in the *thysia* sacrifice." In Aristophanes' *Birds* 518–9, we are informed about the 'custom' (νόμος) of placing the *splanchna* literally in the hands of the gods: ἵν' ὅταν θύων τις ἔπειτ' αὐτοῖς εἰς τὴν χεῖρ', ὡς νόμος ἐστίν, τὰ σπλάγχνα διδῷ. However, this is the only record of such a custom in Greek literature and hence can hardly be extrapolated into a general ritual pattern.[139] More relevant is the fact that *splanchna* may

[139] See: Dunbar comm. *ad. loc.* Cult statues with their hands outstretched are once referred to in Ar. *Eccl.* 778–83, where however the context suggests different types of gifts than *splanchna*. Coins as votive gifts, for instance, are common both in antiquity and in modern times. They were laid down before the feet of the statue or attached to the thighs with wax (Lucian *Philops.* 20; Weinreich 1909, 138; Versnel 1981a, 34; K. Tsakos, in: D. Vassiliou & M. Lykiardopoulou (edd.), *Coinage and Religion. The Ancient World—The Byzantine World. Proceedings of a one-day colloquium* [Athens 1997] 33–48). As Van Straten notes, archaeological evidence of gods with itching palms is lacking, unless we take gods with a *phiale* into consideration, which may well be the model for Aristophanes' pun. The whole imagery is indeed so singular that scholars have had great difficulty in interpreting a couple of inscriptions from Chios, all explicitly pertaining to the priests' parts, with stereotyped lists such as: σπλάγχνα, τὰ ἐς χείρας καὶ γούνατα (*splanchna*, "the parts in the hands and on the knees"), καὶ γλῶσσαν καὶ κρεῶν δύο μοίρας: *LSS* 77, 6–7; *LSS* 129, 4–6. Cf. also: *LSS* 76, 4; *LSS* 119, 4; 120, 2. Puttkammer 1912, 21ff. suggested that this means the parts of *splanchna* that had been deposited in the hands and on the knees of the cult statue. This would imply that cult statues of various different gods would have had this form. The proposal of Sokolowski *ad LSS* no. 77 ll. 6–7 that it should refer to the money paid for taking home the feet of animals and the knees of pigs meets with too many objections. See especially Graf 1985, 40 f.; also Jameson 1994, 40 n. 22; Van Straten 1995, 132 f., followed by G. Berthiaume *o.c.* above (n. 135) espec. 244, and next note. Even so, Robertson 1999, 178 n. 21, is right when he comments on the Chios inscriptions: "Such a drastic procedure is not only unlikely in itself, but inconsistent with the fuller form of expression, unless we suppose that a seated statue also had outstretched hands, and received a double helping of *splanchna*." However, his own suggestion: "It is rather that the deity is *imagined* [my italics] to be seated at the table, with hands and knees ready for the *splanchna*," seems to be even less probable. In sum: *non liquet*. Whatever it is, it is unique for Chios and Aristophanes can hardly be expected to have referred to this. Ekroth 2008, 100 n. 73, is right in suggesting that placing *splanchna* in the hands of a god is functionally just the same as dealing with the *trapezomata*. Auffarth 1994a, 61 n. 7, refers to a church at Crete where he saw an icon with carved

form part of the so-called *trapezomata*, foodstuffs placed on a holy table (*trapeza*) either as a specific and independent form of offering or—as quite often—as an attached, more concrete entremets for the gods added to the central *thusia*.[140] In the autonomous form it also is the way in which the so-called *theoxenia* is organized: a table (*hiera trapeza, trapezoma*) is spread and a banqueting couch is laid out for the divine guest. In its official variant this particular type of divine commensality, which presupposes a visit and presence of the god in person during its performance, does not seem to have been shared by the human hosts.[141] In its private forms, however, it is commonly shared by the worshippers,[142] in contrast to conventional sacrifice, which distinguishes between human and divine portions. Though the term *theoxenia* is known only from the cult of Apollo in Delphi and the Dioscuri the ritual is much more common than has generally been assumed.[143] This *sacrificial* type of commensality, however, is not even

---

wooden arms fixed below it, on which the faithful could suspend gifts. Incidentally, putting things "in the arms" of a god(dess) (κατατίθεμαι εἰς τὰς ἀγκάλας τῆς θεοῦ) does occur in *manumissio* inscriptions (where it concerns the deeds of sale of slaves): Petsas *e.a.* 2000, nos. 3, 63, 93.

[140] Sometimes, but not always in the form that the main gods got a *thusia*, the lesser associates a 'table': Jameson 1994, 39 f. On the different forms "attached to or as centerpiece of a festival with animal sacrifice" and on their possible functions: *ibid.* 54 ff. On cult tables and *trapezomata* see: Puttkammer 1912; G. Goudineau, Ἱεραὶ τράπεζαι, *MEFR* 79 (1967) 77–134; D. Gill, The Classical Greek Cult Table, *HSCP* 70 (1965) 265–269; *idem*, Trapezomata. A Neglected Aspect of Greek Sacrifice, *HThR* 67 (1974) 117–137, *idem, Greek Cult Tables* (New York – London 1991); Van Straten 1995, 154–157.

[141] L. Bruit-Zaidman, Les dieux au festins des mortels. Théoxènes et *xeniai*, in: A.-F. Laurens (ed.), *Entre hommes et dieux. Le convive, le héros, le prophète* (Paris 1989) 12–25, collects the terms referring to comparable acts of hospitality extended to distinguished foreigners and emphasizes the difference from the mythical commensality of gods and mortals. Cf. *eadem*, Offrandes et nourritures: repas des dieux et repas des hommes en Grèce ancienne, in: Georgoudi 2005, 31–46, espec. 40 ff. and cf. below n. 143.

[142] Well-known as *parasitoi*: Jameson 1994, 47 ff. See also above n. 64.

[143] Jameson 1994, 35–57, with extensive literature; E. Kearns, art. theoxenia in *OCD*; Bettinetti 2001, Ch. 7, 211–231, who employs a rather comprehensive meaning of the term; L. Bruit-Zaidman *oo.cc.* (above n. 141); Ekroth 2002, 276–286. On comparable Roman rituals see: J. Scheid, Sacrifice et Banquet à Rome, *MEFRA* 97 (1985) 193–206; *idem*, La spartizione nel sacrificio Romano, in: Grottanelli & Parise 1988, 267–292, and several other contributions to that volume. Most interesting: Veyne 2000. M. Kajava, *Visceratio, Arctos* 32 (1998) 109–131, considers the partition of meat as a custom independent of sacrifice, against which see: J. Scheid, Manger avec les dieux: Partage sacrificiel et commensalité dans la Rome antique, in Georgoudi 2005, 273–287. On the same dilemma see: J. Rüpke, Gäste der Götter—Götter als Gäste, in Georgoudi 2005, 227–239.

remotely alluded to in the evidence of fable,[144] visual art, and comedy, adduced so far.

This is different for the *trapezomata* as an 'attached' form of offering, added to the burnt sacrifice. Generally, raw parts of the sacrificial victim—most frequently including a ham or a leg, the head or half of it, portions of meat[145]—would be deposited upon a table.[146] And it is these gifts for the gods that might also include *splanchna*. In addition, a rich variety of sacrificial cakes of every conceivable description could be placed on the holy table.[147] Now, we have just encountered a majority of these ingredients as fixed elements of the priest's portion, and the complication (and frequent cause of confusion) is that it is hardly possible to distinguish the god's portion from what is normally called the 'priest's portion'.[148] In many—epigraphical—cult prescriptions parts of the victim are directly and exclusively assigned to the priest as his γέρας. In others they are explicitly and exclusively referred to as intended for the god. Sometimes both the θεομοιρία and the ἱερὰ μοῖρα (but these terms are not always distinctive either) are mentioned in one and the same *lex sacra*. Here are two revealing formulations of this ambivalence. A modern one in the warning of Van Straten 1995, 155.

---

[144] Hermes' visits in person to human habitats, to which I will return at pp. 367–370, though distantly related, are of a different nature.

[145] The skin, a very typical priest's portion, would not have been placed on the table.

[146] Robertson 1999, 178 contends that table offerings are typical of healing cults, "since the deity must come to the scene in order to heal" and gives examples from the cult of Asklepios, which, for lack of comparative material about other gods, is not conclusive. He also states that the favourite portion on the table is the "inwards, *splanchna*," for which he does not give any evidence at all.

[147] See: E. Kearns, Cakes in Greek Sacrificial Regulations, in: Hägg 1994, 64–70. The cakes are often destined to be burnt as an extra offering over the fire roasting the entrails (ἐπιθύειν), but an offering in advance (προθύειν) also occurs (*ibid.* in n. 9 extensive references). The size is often indicated in sacrificial calendars. A. Brumfield, Cakes in the Liknon. Votives from the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore on Acrocorinth, *Hesperia* 66 (1997) 147–172, details the many different types and names of cakes in the Demeter cult.

[148] On the problem see: Puttkammer 1912, 19–31; Gill 1991 (above n. 140), 15 f.; Jameson 1994, 40 f. with n. 23; 56 f. with n. 83. More literature on the priest's portion above n. 136. Very rarely also secular persons could be honoured with priestly *gera*. In *I.Mylasa* I 119, ll. 10 ff., a *euergetes* is honoured by one of the *phylai* of the city and will henceforth receive "a share from all the sacrifices contributed by the *phyle*" (μέριδα ἐκ τῶν θυσιῶν πασῶν τῶν ὑπὸ [τ]ῆς φυλῆς συντελουμέν[ων). Parallels only from Mylasa: L. Robert, *Le sanctuaire de Sinuri près de Mylasa. I. Les inscriptions* (Paris 1945) nos. 16, 18, 20, 21, 22. Cf. J.R. Harrison, in: *NDIEC* 9 (2002) no. 1, pp. 1–3.

> To call them priest's perquisites would be a misrepresentation of the intention of the makers and buyers of these depictions. At the moment that a worshipper deposited these offerings on the holy table, they were gifts to the god, even though he knew full well where they would end up.

An ancient Greek one, in *I.Erythrae* 205,[149] where it is ordained that:

> (ll. 13 ff.) if you sacrifice an ox, you have to place at the table, for the god (τῶι θεῶι), three pieces of meat and *splanchna,*
>
> (ll. 23–25) all things that have been placed on the table are the perquisites for the priest (ὅσα δὲ ἐπὶ τὴν τράπεζαν παρατεθῆι ταῦτα εἶναι γέρα τῶι ἱερεῖ).

The two statements, ancient and modern, convey the same message, the latter displaying a matter of fact, not to say cynical, touch. There is no attempt to conceal the aspect of *pia fraus.* The obvious destiny of the foodstuffs makes them an easy pray for comic puns: in Ar. *Pax* 1059, the charlatan-priest Hierokles asks: "Where is the table?" (ποῦ τράπεζα;), which he wishes to be understood as referring to his priestly duties in honour of the god, but which to the audience rather betrays his interest in the priest's portions heaped on it.[150]

Such ambivalences might perhaps throw some suspicion on the validity of the distinctions between gods' and humans' portions in the testimonia that I have so far adduced, but such doubts are unnecessary. First, as was so glaringly exemplified in the two phrases of the Erythraean inscription, the decision of which of the two possible options is intended depends entirely and exclusively on focus and context: although the author of the cult text is perfectly aware that the *trapezomata* are intended for both god and priest, he also knows how to preserve each beneficiary for the right moment and context. A second consideration, however, is far more relevant to our issue. Puns as presented in *literary* sources of a comical, satirical, ironical or derogatory nature, such as the ones that we are exploring in this chapter, are entirely dependent on the existence of stereotypes. In order to elicit laughter by evoking a surprising deviation from or reversal of

---

[149] = *LSAM* 24, for Asklepios, discussed by Graf 1985, 250 ff., "Obwohl ausdrücklich bestimmt wird, diese Gaben seien für den Gott, wird abschliessend festgelegt, dass sie alle dem Priester zukommen sollten." I refer the reader to his perceptive discussion of this ambiguity.

[150] Van Straten 1995, 165.

normality there must exist a generally accepted imagery of normality to begin with. Hence, in our case the sources that play on sacrificial food consistently reveal—and exploit—a stereotyped general imagery. *Splanchna* are *typically* the humans' portion, *kolai* are *typically* the priest's portion, as are the tongue,[151] the head (or half of it) and the skin, whereas *mêria* (burnt) are *typically* the gods' portion as are the sacrum and the tail.[152] Accordingly, in the literary texts discussed so far as well as in the ones that will be brought up shortly, the Olympian gods are never presented or imagined as munching edible food and enjoying solid dishes, raw or roasted.[153] Nor are they ever associated with their 'holy table' without being immediately referred back to their typical diet: the *knise*. Hermes, on the other hand, in the same texts typically never stops gobbling down, or at least hankering after, any part of sacrificial foodstuffs he can lay his hand on. In those passages where one of these stereotypes is *not* intended, the reader must be warned by helpful hints or clues.[154]

---

[151] On the tongue of the victim as priests's prerogative see: E. Kadletz, The Tongues of Greek Sacrificial Victims, *HThR* 74 (1981) 21–29, mainly on the basis of epigraphical evidence. N. Robertson, in: W.J. Slater (ed.), *Dining in a Classical Context* (Ann Arbor 1991) 25–57, espec. 31 f., comments on the handling of the victim's tongue in *leges sacrae*: the tongue is usually the priests perquisite (testimonia at p. 49 n. 36) together with other portions, or belongs to the table offerings (49 n. 38), which as we have seen are essentially identical. Furley 1996, 24 f., emphasizes its role as a prerogative of the herald, in his function of assistant at sacrifices, hence also in a priestly function. The only time it is used with reference to Hermes is in Ar. *Plut*. 1110, where Trygaios says when Hermes arrives announcing bad news: ἡ γλῶττα τῷ κήρυκι τούτων τέμνεται. The scholia interpret it as intended for Hermes for being a good messenger on account of a proverb ἡ γλῶττα τῷ κήρυκι, but scholarly opinions differ widely.

[152] Significant in this respect is the stereotyped imagery in vase painting of the simultaneous actions of the burning of *osphys* for the gods and the roasting of *splanchna* for the human participants: Peirce 1993, 230–234. L. Scubla, Sur le mythe de Prométhée et l'analyse du sacrifice grec, *Europe* 904–905 (2004) (*Mythe et mythologie dans l'Antiquité gréco-romaine*) 55–72, while strictly maintaining the distinction between the two, interprets this (in the words of Sineux 2006, 68f.) as "une forme de commensalité qui permet aux mortels de participer à la nature des immortels."

[153] This means that the ambivalent nature of the eatables on the *trapeza* (officially intended as gods' portion but in practice ending up as the priest's part), cannot serve as proof that Hermes did gobble up (or craved) *gods' portions*. This aspect, though prevailing in epigraphical texts, is lacking in the relevant literary sources.

[154] There is one additional, but significant, hint that the preparing and eating of *splanchna* is a typical human part of the sacrificial process. This is the frequent representation of Herakles in the rôle of *splanchnoptes* focussing on his avid preparation of *splanchna* on spits. He is pictured here in his ususal character of a glutton, with a special pun on his ability to down an entire bull. The evidence in: J.-L. Durand, *Sacrifice et labour en Grèce ancienne* (Paris 1986) 145–173; cf. J.-L. Durand & A. Schnapp, Sacrificial Slaughter and Initiatory Hunt, in: C. Bérard *et alii* (edd.), *City of Images* (Prince-

The suggestion of hunger, gluttony and a peculiar preference for a human fashion in table manners emerging from these passages proves indeed to be a stereotyped trait in the god's description. An extended passage in Ar. *Pax* 179 ff. provides precious information. The gods have retired to a higher sphere. When Trygaios flies up to heaven he encounters Hermes at the threshold of Zeus' residence, left behind there to guard—significantly—the gods' "cooking utensils: stew-pots and casseroles and amphoras." When Trygaios and the chorus attempt to rescue Peace, who is locked up in a grotto, Hermes (375) comes and announces that he has orders from Zeus to kill Trygaeus. The latter begs for mercy, reminding him of (378 f.) "the meat that I so kindly brought you" (ναὶ πρὸς τῶν κρεῶν ἀγὼ προθύμως σοι φέρων ἀφικόμην, cf. 192, where Trygaios had offered the meat to Hermes). The chorus, consisting of peasants, reminds the god (385 f.) of "the welcome piglet that you got from me and gobbled down" (εἴ τι κεχαρισμένον χοιρίδιον οἶσθα παρ' ἐμοῦ γε κατεδηδοκώς). At 393 the chorus beseeches the god to cooperate, addressing him as ὦ φιλανθρωπότατε καὶ μεγαλοδωρότατε δαιμόνων, and promises to conduct lavish sacrifices and processions in his honour (395 f.: καί σε θυσίαισιν ἱεραῖσι προσόδοις τε μεγάλαισι διὰ παντός, ὦ δέσποτ', ἀγαλοῦμεν ἡμεῖς ἀεί), indeed to reallocate all the major Athenian festivals (Panathenaia, the great Mysteries etc.) to Hermes himself (418–422). Not bad at all for a god who in reality cannot boast one single official festival in the city of Athens. Hermes now leads those present in a sacrificial ceremony including the prayer to the gods.[155]

Once more the focus is on *hungry* Hermes. After Peace has returned to earth, the crowds of peasants returning to their farms give Hermes (565) Utopian visions of "barley cake and copious banquets." When, much later, Trygaios suggest offerings of pots of beans to goddess Peace

---

ton 1989) 56 f.; Peirce 1993, 239 f. On Herakles as a proverbial glutton in Old Comedy and Satyr Play: G.K. Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme* (Oxford 1972) 81–93; Wilkins 2000, 90–96. The same holds for Satyrs preparing *splanchna*: Peirce 1993, 240.

[155] Furley 1996 put much emphasis on this in order to support his thesis of Hermes the mediator. Indeed, this play contains abundant evidence of Hermes in his role as *hermeneus* between men and gods. This is, of course, not inconsistent with the emphatic human aspects of his nature, as among others Gh. Jay-Robert, Fonction des dieux chez Aristophane. Exemple de Zeus, d'Hermès et de Dionysos, *REA* 104 (2002) 11–24, espec. 16–19, argues: "un tel rôle (i.e. de médiateur) en fait donc un dieu proche des hommes." So, too, A.M. Bowie, *Aristophanes. Myth, Ritual and Comedy* (Cambridge 1993) 279.

(χύτραις ἱδρυτέον, 922), this is a final reference to another of Hermes' culinary peculiarities. The chorus indignantly replies: "What, stew-pots, like a wretched little Hermes?" (χύτραισιν, ὥσπερ μεμφόμενον Ἑρμίδιον;), referring to the *chutroi*, that other humble—and far from Olympian—delicacy that was presented to the god at the third day of the Anthesteria.

Finally, a few words about one peculiar text which seems to reveal another ungodly type of culinary preference of our god. In the course of a sacrifice pictured in Ar. *Pax* 1039 ff., one of Trygaios' slaves says to Trygaios: "Take the (two) thighbones (τὼ μηρώ) and lay them on the altar. I'll go fetch the *splanchna* and the *thulemata*." *Thulemata* can be defined as *alphita* (barley groats or meal) sprinkled with wine and olive oil added as a supplement to the sacrifices for the gods.[156] From different texts it is clear that these *thulemata* were often kneaded into small lumps or pellets.[157] Most probably the comic author Telekleides had this variant in mind when he made a person invite the god Hermes with the words: "O Lord Hermes, gulp down some of the *thulemata*" (ὦ δέσποτ' Ἑρμῆ, κάπτε τῶν θυλημάτων).[158] Contrary to the *splanchna*, these *thulemata* are definitely and as far as we know exclusively part of the god's portion and destined to be burnt together with the μήρια. Here, however, this god's portion, before it can be transformed into *knise* palatable to Olympians, is adapted to Hermes' taste in that it is not burnt: he gorges them raw.[159] It evokes a scene where Hermes, in the shape of a herm invariably present at sacrifices, is regaled with little titbits that we see him treated to in his most common culinary ambiance, which we shall discuss in the following section.

---

[156] Scholion Ar. *Pax* 1040: θυλήματα· τὰ τοῖς θεοῖς ἐπιθυόμενα ἄλφιτα. ἐπιρραίνεται δὲ οἴνῳ καὶ ἐλαίῳ.

[157] On all this: Van Straten 1995, 141–144.

[158] Τηλεκλείδης ἐν Στερροῖς fr. 35 *PCG* = *CAF* 33.

[159] These *thulemata* are identical or closely resemble the οὐλαί, barley groates which were also thrown on animal and altar before burning the victim. F. Graf in: Horstmanshoff 2002, 121 points out that this is "primeval food, not really eaten anymore by human beings in historical Greece. In an Argive ritual the first meat roasted after rekindling the hearth is obtained in exchange for barley. It thus symbolizes the period before roasted meat, when man did not yet use fire." If so, poor little Hermes on the sacrificial scene, regaled on barley crumbs, is thus pictured in the same position as in the hymn before he roasted the first meat for the gods. But I am not sure whether he or the other participants were aware of that fact.

So far our conclusion may be that if a comic author wants to give people a real good laugh the easiest way is to make some juicy allusions to dietary niceties. But that much we knew already. Like all authors of comedy Aristophanes is fond of it.[160] More directly relevant to our issue is that the poet is consistent in the nature of his allusions: normal Olympians may be greedy, hungry, bereft of food, but with one doubtful exception (the *splanchna* placed in the outstretched hands) this is always alluded to in terms of their customary ritual portion of the sacrifice, namely the *knise* (or its interruption).[161] Hermes, on the other hand, is constantly pictured as insatiably hungry, indeed as hungry by definition, hence continuously on the lookout for food. However, his diet is *never knise* but always concrete foodstuffs, very much including sacrificial meat and without exception the humans' portions, especially the *splanchna,* or the priest's part, for instance the ham. Accordingly, his manner of eating is equally consistently described as "gobbling down."

2. *"The titbits Hermes likes to eat"*

After this presentation of sacrificial eatables that either were not intended for Hermes' watering mouth (as in the section on herms) or remained at the level of craving or reminiscence (as in fable or comedy), it is time to briefly discuss a dish that has a niche in real life and which justly may be called Hermes' 'special'. The "good things" Hermes was treated to by "barmaids" in the *Plutus*, such as wine, cakes, honey, dried figs, "which are fitting for Hermes to eat" (ὅσ' εἰκός ἐστιν Ἑρμῆν ἐσθίειν), are, in the vernacular of daily life, known as *hermaia*, the titbits depos-

[160] For the other comic authors see: J. Wilkins, The Significance of Food and Eating in Greek Comedy, *LCM* 18 (1993) 66–74; *idem*, Comic Cuisine: Food and Eating in the Comic Polis, in: Dobrov 1997, 250–270; Wilkins 2000 provides a full collection of the testimonia from comedy. Cf. B. Pütz, *The Symposium and Komos in Aristophanes* (Oxford 2007). On the utopian imagery of culinary abundance in comedy: W. Fauth, Kulinarisches und Utopisches in der griechischen Komödie, *WSt* 7 (1973) 39–62; M. Pellegrino, *Utopie e immagini gastronomiche nei frammenti dell' "Archaia"* (Bologna 2000).

[161] This is even true for the visual material: in three vase paintings, probable inspired by a satyr-play, Iris, who apparently was sent by the other gods to collect their portion of the sacrifices from the altars, is seen holding the tail—an unmistakable gods' part—in her hand while being molested by satyrs. Cf. Van Straten 1995, 130.

ited at herms at cross-roads, at the markets[162] or other public places.[163] Though intended as gifts for the god, they were regarded as *hermaia* in the proverbial sense of 'unexpected piece of luck, godsend' by hungry wanderers, who had their share. The expression Ἕρμαιον κοινόν (*Paroem. Gr.* II, p. 420, no. 94) most probably means: a thing that one finds is common property (that is: falls to the finder).[164] In this quality, they functionally equalled the offerings to the goddess Hekate[165]—a goddess in various respects closely related to Hermes[166]—, which, as so-called Ἑκάτης δεῖπνα ("meals of Hekate") set out by the rich at the

[162] Especially at the markets, one may presume. Farnell vol. V (1909) 26 notes that: "Hermes was the market-god par excellence (…) Agoraios was his sole political title" and he gives an 84–page collection of the testimonia. Cf. Pritchett 1998, 128 f. and M. Osanna, Il culto di Hermes Agoraios ad Atene, *Ostraka* 1 (1992) 215–222. It is significant in this context that the *agora* carried distinctly negative connotations in literature and epigraphy: Kurke 1999, Ch. 5, with a focus on "barmaids" and prostitutes; M. Kajava, Hanging Around Downtown, *Arctos* 35 (2001) 79–83, espec. 82, quoting Basilius Caes. 637.22 (Migne *PG* 30 p. 713) on the *agora* as staging ἀκόσμων ἀνθρώπων…τὰς διατριβάς. Cf. Ar. *Eq.* 295–298, where the sausage seller, in answer to the Paphlagonian's remark "I admit I steal, but you don't," says: "I do too, by Hermes Agoraios, and I commit perjury right before their eyes."

[163] There is a nice description in *Anth. Pal.* VI, 299.

[164] Hesych. s.v. σῦκον ἐφ' Ἑρμῇ (a proverbial expression in which we recognize the figs presented to the god in Ar. *Plut.* 1120); Eustathius 1572.57 on *Od.* 7.116. Suda, Phot. Et. Magn. s.v. ἕρμαιον· τὸ ἀπροσδόκητον κέρδος ἀπὸ τῶν ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς τιθεμένων ἀπαρχῶν ἃς οἱ ὁδοιπόροι κατεσθίουσιν. Cf. Nilsson *GGR* I 505.

[165] C.H. Greenewalt, *Ritual Dinners in Early Historic Sardis* (Berkeley etc. 1978) 43 f.; W. Burkert, Glaube und Verhalten, in: *Le sacrifice dans l'Antiquité* (Entretiens Hardt XXVII, Vandoeuvres 1981), espec. 127 f.; Jameson 1994, 38. Ample discussion with literature in: S.I. Johnston, Crossroads, *ZPE* 88 (1991) 217–224 with the evidence in n. 11; cf. *eadem* 1999, 60 f.; F.K. Smith, Hekate's Suppers, in: St. Ronan (ed.), *The Goddess Hekate. Studies in Ancient Pagan and Christian Religion & Philosophy* vol. 1 (Hastings 1992) 57–63; Knibbeler 2005, 344–347, with the sources in n. 24. On triform Hekate see: N. Werth, Hekate. Untersuchungen zur dreigestaltigen Göttin (Diss. Saarbrücken 2006).

[166] See: T. Kraus, *Hekate* (Heidelberg 1960) 71; 85; 101; 151. Hermes was closely associated with Hekate in house cult, many houses boasting both a herm and a Hekataion (statue or chapel of Hekate). On Hekate and Hermes as door-gods: F.G. Maier, Torgötter, in: *Festschrift Hildegard Hommel* (Tübingen 1961) 93–104. Together they received a purification and coronation at New month's day. In her Dissertation *Passage à travers Hécate. Portes, routes, carrefours et autres figures de l'entre deux* (Paris 2000), to be published in Suppléments Kernos) A. Zografou, devotes a very informative chapter II b pp. 236–325 to the close relationship between the two gods. I thank the author for sending me a draft of her book. On Hekate as protector of entrances and doors: Zografou pp. 127–156. For this latter aspect of Hekate see also: S.I. Johnston, *Hekate Soteira. A Study of Hekate's Roles in the Chaldean Oracles and Related Literature* (Atlanta 1990) Ch. II; *eadem* 1991 (*o.c.* preceding note). Like Hermes, Hekate is an intermediary between gods and men, especially in Hesiod: J.S. Clay, The Hecate of the Theogony, *GRBS* 25 (1984) 27–38.

30th day of each month, developed into a sort of dole for beggars and paupers. In everyday practice these meals normally tended to be rather the inverse of customary meals, consisting as they did of offal, and in the case of Hecate very unsavoury offal at that—besides cakes, cheese, fish also puppies.[167] The term of abuse Ἑκαταῖα κατεσθίειν[168] is used to disqualify a person as a rogue.

In sum, the proverbial 'eaters of Hekataia and Hermaia' are, to put it in complimentary terms, a caricature of the priests to whom in the end the offerings placed on the sacred tables would normally fall. Or to put it in less complimentary terms, they mirror the *bomolochos*, the person who lurks by the altar in the desperate hope of snatching offerings for his own consumption.[169] In an unofficial way, both Hermaia and Hekataia display the very same *pia fraus* that we discovered in the cult prescriptions concerning priests' part and gods' part, as specified by a scholion stating that "the rich sent a *deipnon* in the evening as an offering, but the poor used to come and eat it but said that it was Hekate who had eaten it" (ἡ Ἑκάτη ἔφαγεν αὐτά).[170]

The phenomenon of the *hermaia*—although, or precisely *because*, it is so peculiar—corroborates the image emerging from earlier evidence. The (simple) offerings at the herms once more put the god in a singular position: in contradistinction to burnt offerings as for the normal Olympian gods, the Hermaia are of the nature of—or if one wishes, a parody of—an edible human meal. Besides, there is a constant waver-

---

[167] Different from the Hermaia, these offerings to Hekate were, besides dishes, also purifications. The less appetizing bits of the 'meal', such as, most particularly, the puppies, belonged to the *katharmata/katharsia,* offscourings of any kind, which gradually became confounded with the more culinary elements in the 'meals' proper. See on this ambiguity fundamentally: Knibbeler 2005. Cf. on this and various other types of sacrifice 'by elimination': A. Zographou, Élimination rituelle et sacrifice en Grèce ancienne, in: Georgoudi 2005, 197–214. Hekate herself, for that matter, was "eater of excrements" (*borborophorba PGM* IV 1402. Cf. Hippocr. *Morb. sacr.* 1.VI.360f. (Littré): excrements indicate Hekate Enodia). See: Burkert 1996a, 46 f.

[168] Dem. 54.39. Interesting with respect to both Hermes and Hekate is a similar negative notion in the words σκύβαλα and ἀπομαγδαλιά (O. Masson, Nouvelles notes d'anthroponomie grècque, *ZPE* 112 [1996] 143–150; J.-L. Perpillou, Du manger de chien, *REA* 100 [1998] 325–339). The first term is a corruption of (ἐ)ς κύνας βάλε ("throw it to the dogs") and both words mean 'the scraps of food that are left for the dogs' (animals which, by the way, in Homer are called τραπεζῆες, 'table mates'). We have seen that both Hermes and Hekate in various different ways are connected with dogs. See also: A. Zografou, Hécate et Hermès. Passages et vols de chiens, *Uranie* 7 (199) 173–191.

[169] Wilkins 2000, 88 ff.

[170] Schol ad Ar. *Plut*. 594.

ing between the vision of a meal shared between (lowly) mortals and the god on the one hand, and the idea that the parts intended for the god are pinched from his altar or pedestal by rogues, on the other.[171] Hermaia, in other words, remotely call to mind a *very* low budget version of *theoxenia*, but if so, they tend to be *flawed theoxenia*, since, all too often, the god is robbed of his part of the meal. Target of human jokes and canine anointments, Hermes in his form of a herm is once more the underdog, as far as consumption is concerned. Sometimes however, he fares better, as we will see now.

3. *"Companion of the feast"* (δαιτὸς ἑταίρε)

"Between the simple offerings at meals and the more structured and formal *theoxenia* comes the offering made by Eumaios the swineherd in his hut (*Od.* 14.418–456)." Thus Jameson 1994, 38, who does not enlarge on the subject. Others did.[172] For her interpretation of the hermaic sacrifice in the hymn as actually representing a *dais eïse,*[173] in

---

[171] And not only by rogues. Two epigrams in the *Anth. Pal.,* IX 72 and 316, beautifully illustrate the miserable position of the Hermes statue/herm. Both mention two gods—apparently in a statuesque form, most likely herms—guarding the borders: Hermes and Herakles. In no. 316, Hermes complains to the passers-by that Herakles keeps every edible gift for himself, leaving nothing to Hermes. Hermes therefore requests that henceforth people will explicitly divide their gifts in two and declare which part is intended for either of the two gods. Clearly, the ways of the two *parasitoi* have parted: one has now definitely developed into the proverbial heavyweight glutton. The other—though equally interested in food—is and remains the underdog: hungry Hermes. In no. 72, Hermes is described as being content with milk and honey. "But not so Herakles." He demands a lamb, or a fat ram, and always selects a piece of sacrificial meat (θύος) as his own portion. On the other hand, the special portion for Hermes as opposed to a meaty dish is spelled out in *Anth. Pal.* VI 299, where a peasant treats a statue of Hermes to grapes, a piece of cake, figs, olives, a rind of soft cheese, flour, a heap of grated hard cheese, and a sip of wine, all ingredients of the average peasant meal. After this, he promises to sacrifice (ῥέξειν φημί) a goat at the sea-shore. Am I too suspicious if I fear that the statue (probably a herm, as usually in these epigrams) receives the customary human parts but that—in his statuesque form—he will never even *see* the meaty parts?

[172] Some recent literature on this much-discussed passage: Kadletz 1984; Petropoulou 1987; Clay 1989, 124–127, whose description and interpretation I gratefully adopt in what follows. Recently Jaillard 2007, 114–118, contributed a discussion in which he emphasizes the strong similarities between Eumaios' 'dish' and the 'sacrificial' scene in the *Hymn to Hermes*, ranging both among the categories of *trapezomata* and *theoxenia*. On the figure and social status of Eumaios see: W.G. Thalmann, *The Swineherd and the Bow: Representations of Class in the Odyssey* (Ithaca – London 1998) 84–100.

[173] On this term see: S. Saïd, *Études de littérature ancienne* (Paris 1979) 17–22; G. Berthiaume, *Les rôles du mageiros* (Leiden 1982) 50 f. Clay herself also refers to Kahn

the sense of a human communal meal, Clay 1989, 121 f., even based herself on the Homeric scene. Here are the main data. The pious Eumaios slaughters a pig in honour of his new guest, the disguised Odysseus. There is a prayer to 'all the gods' and a modest Olympian fire sacrifice with burnt meat wrapped in fat and sprinkled with barley meal. The rest of the meat is chopped up, skewered on spits, roasted, removed from the spits and tossed onto the 'cook's table' (βάλλον δ' εἰν ἐλεοῖσιν 432).[174] Next the host carves and distributes the cooked meat into seven portions, "of which he placed (θῆκεν) one, with a prayer, for the Nymphs and for Hermes,[175] and distributed the rest to the company." For Odysseus is the portion of honour. Before starting the meal Eumaios sacrifices the *argmata*[176] to the gods and makes a libation of wine.

So, whereas the other gods receive their canonical offering of *burnt* meat as a preliminary to the feast, Hermes is counted as one of the guests invited to take part in the *dais eise*[177]—the role in which we have

---

1978, 65: "Hermès traite donc le groupe divin comme une communauté humaine." Cf. on the element of equality during the *dais* also: P. Schmitt Pantel, Sacrificial Meal and Symposium: Two Models of Civic Institution in the Archaic City, in: O. Murray (ed.), *Sympotica. A Symposium on the Symposium* (Oxford 1990) 22; *eadem, La cité au banquet. Histoire des repas publics dans les cités grecques* (Rome 1997=1992), 5; 37–42; 450 f.

[174] Heubeck comm. *ad* 432 notes that the term εἰν ἐλεοῖσιν is rare in descriptions of sacrifice; it recurs only at *Il.* 9.215, in a different wording. The term is explained by Athen. 4.173a as 'the cook's table'. Cf. Ar. *Eq.* 152 ff. Cf. *LfgrE* s.v.

[175] Hermes and the Nymphs are close companions both in literature and in visual art. See: Nilsson *GGR* I, 274; Zanker 1965, 56–59; T.L. Shear, A Votive Relief from the Athenian Agora, *Opuscula Romana* 9 (1973) 183–191; Van Straten 1976; J. Larson, The Corycian Nymphs and the Bee Maidens of the Homeric *Hymn to Hermes, GRBS* 36 (1995) 341–358, espec. 348 ff., with evidence in n. 25; *eadem, o.c.* (above n. 120) 255, on "the special genre of 'hermetic' nymphs." *Eadem, Greek Nymphs. Myth, Cult, Lore* (Oxford 2001), index s.v. Hermes: 'relations with nymphs', and 'on votive reliefs.' A special relationship between nymphs and Odysseus throughout the Odyssey has been traced by I. Malkin, The *Odyssey* and the *Nymphs*, *Gaia* 5 (2001) 11–27. On the "polis-cave" at Thiaki, certainly devoted to the nymphs, perhaps also (later?) to the Heros Odysseus, see recently: M. Deoudi, *Ithake: Die Polis-Höhle, Odysseus und die Nymphen* (Thessaloniki 2008).

[176] On these *argmata* see: Kadletz 1984. Petropoulou 1987 argues that these ἄργματα are ἀπαρχαί, which is probable, but her thesis that all elements of Eumaios' sacrifice are—in various different ways—'first fruits offerings' is less convincing. The notion of *argmata* may return in the term *maschalismata* in the Phrearrioi *lex sacra*. See for full discussion in *NGSL* 166 ff.

[177] "Hermes participates in the human *dais*": thus Clay, who connects this with the proverbial wisdom mentioned by Plutarch, *De garrul.* 502: "whenever a sudden silence falls during a meeting or an assembly, people say that Hermes has come in." On Kahn's 1978, 184 misinterpretation of this proverb, see W. Hübner, Hermes als

seen him before in fable and legend. This implies an intimate commensality between the giver and the intended recipient, as it still can (or until recently could) be found in Greece.[178] Semonides (Fr. 20 W), quoted by a scholiast *ad loc*., does not even shrink from writing θύουσι Νύμφαις τῷ τε Μαιάδος τόκῳ· οὗτοι γὰρ ἀνδρῶν αἷμ' ἔχουσι ποιμένων ("They bring their offering to the Nymphs and the son of Maia. For these have the blood of shepherd men"). This is so bloody 'intimate' that generations of scholars have been fussing around with all sorts of conjectures and West, who does retain the manuscript reading, at last gives in by translating: "for they're of shepherd stock." Indeed, even *if* the reference to blood is a metaphor, the expression still remains dangerously daring, blood being as basic a marker of the *differences* between gods and men as is the diet. The very human type of commensality in the Eumaios scene may have provoked the unique equation of their body juices.

In what way was the divine guest supposed to consume his meal? Kadletz, not the first to ask this question, suggests that Eumaios may have planned to place this portion at some herm, since, in his view, the offering should be equated with the *hermaia* placed before herms, as we discussed.[179] However, apart from the question whether such herms did exist in Homer's time, it should be clear that *hermaia* are of quite a different nature than Hermes' portion at Eumaios' table. Hermaia are gifts to the god (and very modest gifts at that) lacking further social contextualisation, but the scene at Eumaios' table is one of a communal

---

musischer Gott, *Philologus* 130 (1986) 153–157, espec. 157 n. 20: "Hermes' sudden, uncanny, almost demonic, presence attests not only to his patronage of social institutions." Cf. also Petropoulou 1987.

[178] See: Jameson 1994, 55. In modern Greece the Panaghia or a Saint may be invited to take part in the meal. G.A. Megas, *Greek Calendar Customs* (Athens 1963²) 40–45, informs us that the main dish to adorn the New Year's Day table is the *vassilopitta* (the cake named after St. Basilios, the Saint of New Year's Day). The current custom is to cut one piece of the vassilopitta for St. Basilios and the Panagia, often also followed by slices for one's own family, the house, the cattle, the poor. All animate beings, included oxen, goat and mule, will eat their pieces. The Saint is believed to visit every house during the night. Each household makes ready for his visit: a table remains laid all night so that he may sit and eat. At the question what people do with St. Basil's piece when it appears that it has not been consumed, Angelos Chaniotis, who drew my attention to this New Years custom, told me: "At least in my family, we ate that food." In antiquity such meals may have had their origins in house cults. So: D. Gill, Trapezomata, HThR 67 (1974) 135 f.; Kadletz 1984, 105. Burkert 1985, 107 mentions Zeus Philios as an example.

[179] Kadletz 1984, 103 ff.

meal, at which Hermes is a guest and receives a portion *equal to* that of the other guests.[180] That is the focal point; what happened with the portion after the dinner may be of interest to the modern reader, but both poet and ancient audience could not care less.[181]

6. Conclusion

Altogether we are now able to answer the question posed in the opening line of section 5 of this Chapter. No, our poor divine *hetairos* will not remain deprived of an occasional bite or two. Apollo even addresses him as δαιτὸς ἑταίρε ("companion of the feast," *H.Hermes* 436), perfectly understandable now in light of the Eumaios scene. However, surveying the total culinary mishmash we can be more precise. From early archaic poetry (Homer) via late archaic and early classical sources (the hymn, fables, vase paintings) up to and including classical comedy and contemporary ritual, *all* descriptions or allusions

---

[180] Cf. Saïd *o.c.* above (n. 173), 17: "Le 'partage égal' dans l'*Iliade* comme dans l'*Odyssée* est d'abord un *partage entre égaux*. Il ne concerne que les pairs et exclut les autres." The term θῆκεν has provoked some discussion. A number of scholars take it in a pregnant meaning as "he set apart" (*e.g.* Kadletz 1981, 103 ff.; Petropoulos 1987, 140, 142; Jaillard 2007, 116). This may entail the idea that the god's portion undergoes a different treatment from that of the other guests, as we just saw in the suggested deposition at a herm. Others propose that the god's portion was placed at a special *trapeza,* as in a private *theoxenia.* Petropoulou 1987, 143, "the object of Eumaeus' θῆκεν is a portion of roast pork that is served up on the table for a group of deities invited as divine guests amidst the company of mortals," leaves the matter nicely undecided. Jaillard 2007, 116 n. 93, agrees: "Il n'est donc pas nécessaire qu'il y ait une table spécifique." In the case of Hermes most likely the meat was placed on the same table of the other (human) guests. Hermes is a table mate *par excellence*.

[181] Jameson 1994, 37: "The fate of offerings in the world of men, once they have been consecrated to the gods either by burning or by deposition in a sacred place (such as sacred table) was of secondary importance or even indifference. Neither concern or lack of concern with what happens to them is inherent in the action, as comparative evidence shows." It is highly unlikely that a piece of tasty meat, such as the other table mates received as well, should have been deposited outside the house to be snatched by dogs, foxes or whatever other interested starveling. Most probably the host himself ate it at a later stage as still in Greece (see n. 178). Cf. Veyne 2000, 16, who translates "Il mit de côté" (wrongly in my view) and surmises that Eumaios kept it for himself to eat next day (rightly in my view). The odd consideration that Hermes, being a god, had already enjoyed his part of the burnt meat (and *argmata*)—hence should not be hungry anymore—was, I guess, one of the reasons for G.P. Shipp, *Studies in the Language of Homer*[2] (Cambridge 1972) 340 to reject these lines as spurious. That is just another misunderstanding of Hermes' culinary position. So rightly A. Hoekstra comm. *ad loc.* Of Kadletz' observation "At any rate, the portion set aside for Hermes and the nymphs is a separate offering [destined for such a deposition] and does not constitute part of the sacrifice made to the gods" the last part is right, while the first, as I argued, is less likely.

share one central message, namely that from a culinary perspective Hermes never behaves in a decent Olympian fashion. On the contrary, he always seems to forget that he is a god, consistently crossing the border and landing on the human side. As a guest in the house of a mortal host he partakes in human meals; as a herm in streets and at market places he is regaled with titbits of all kinds of human foodstuff, as the eternal attendant at sacrificial ceremonies he either remains an insatiate spectator or, *if* allowed a share, his helping is a *human's* portion. Even in the one and only allusion to his partaking of a god's portion, the *thulemata*, he does not eat them processed according to divine taste. Mortally allergic to *knise*, so it seems, Hermes gulps them down before they can be transformed into food for the gods, just as, reversely, he once transformed the immortal cattle into mortal cows by killing and preparing them for a dish or *dais*.

If now, armed with these insights, we return to the sacrificial scene in the Homeric Hymn, we are reminded of the curious paradox which has been in the focus of attention in recent scholarship. *Initially*, Hermes was hankering after flesh. *Yet*, he roasted it, chopped it up, and distributed it as a *geras* for the (twelve) gods. *In spite of this*, the meat destined for the gods is called *hosie kreaôn*, that is: sacrificial meat released for human consumption. *Nonetheless*, "the sweet savour wearied him, god though he was." *Still*, he did not "gulp it down his throat." Generally, the latter token of inhibition is attributed to his sudden awareness that eating roasted meat would disqualify him as a god. I do not object, but this does not alter the fact that just a few lines earlier in the very same context Hermes himself must have assumed that the Olympian gods do like roasted meat. Why else treat them to a chateaubriand à point? Now, you cannot have your cake and eat it too (with apologies for the mess this is making of the menu). There are just too many 'althoughs' and 'yets' and 'despites' in the whole story. No interpretation, neither the (reversed) sacrifice theory, nor that of the *dais eïse*, can cope with all of them. Both theories are left with the same problem that, although Hermes may be a great lover of roasted meat, the Olympian gods are not, as the poet himself emphatically reminds the listener/reader with his helpful note: "god though he was." In particular if one relies as heavily on Eumaios' *dais* as Clay does, one cannot ignore that the culinary distinctions between 1) the other Olympians, 2) Hermes and 3) the mortal table-companions determine Eumaios' whole distributive system. And as Homer expressly comments: Eumaios for one knew a thing or two about how to entertain gods and men (14.433: περὶ γὰρ φρεσὶν αἴσιμα ᾔδη). Nor is this the end of the confusion in the hymn.

After renouncing a taste of the meat, Hermes (134) collects what is left: "the fat and all the flesh" and "puts it away placing it high up in the high-roofed byre." Is this not a splendid instance of the human privilege of ἐκφορά ('take away allowed')?

Altogether the whole jumble leaves room for only one honest conclusion: though it betrays features of both, the scene in the hymn represents neither a sacrifice nor a *dais* as we know them from epigraphic or literary sources. The impression—whether intended by the author or not—is that Hermes seems to be completely unaware of the prevailing dietary codes, mixing them up by treating the Olympian gods to a *human* dinner and thus projecting his own predilection for a steak *à la humaine* onto the world of the gods. Just as, later in the hymn, he errs in his expectations about the type of utopian wealth awaiting him in the gods' abode, which do not fit Olympian conditions either, as we discussed above p. 325.

Viewed in this perspective, all this is a perfect mythical metaphor of the god's cultic status in everyday life. The so-called sacrifice in the hymn could be pictured in such an ironic, ambiguous and indeed deranging fashion because the favourite refreshments of the god in daily cult and their reflections in literature themselves were marked by the same ironic ambiguity. I am not arguing that the sacrificial scene of the hymn is deliberately *designed* as such a reflection. Suffice it to observe that the passage conveys the very same message through very similar means. Myth here seems to allude to (cultic) reality just as more directly fable and comedy did. They all play with the ravenous appetite of Hermes, a *boulimia* that, as far as I know, has worried only one commentator.[182] The overwhelming impact of this theme in such a variety of literary sources seems to have found its inspiration in the fact that Hermes *both* as a herm—a shape becoming ubiquitous in the same period in which the hymn was produced—attending, but

[182] Haft 1996, who sees it as a corollary of the ephebic cattle-raiding ritual which in her view is the ritual cradle of the god's mythology. One may also see it as a characteristic of the trickster, a mythical figure with which Hermes is often identified (Burkert 1985, 156). Tricksters, such as the modern Greek Karageosis, are notorious for their culinary greed. Cf. Bierl 1994, 36. We have seen (above n. 171) that the Greeks themselves had already observed his similarities with Herakles in this respect. Once more, I wish to emphasize that it is not my purpose to cast doubt on such theories of origin. My aim is to trace the socio-historical niche of the *lasting and indeed increasing* predominance and ubiquity of the image of the never satisfied glutton in the god Hermes.

not partaking in sacrifices for other gods, being instead regaled on little titbits which, however, he had to share with 'eaters of Hekataia', *and* as a regular table mate is *always* hungry, as contemporary literary texts emphasize.

It was our focus on the culinary aspects that enabled us to expose Hermes' curiously ungodly behaviour. There is no more appropriate marker of cultural distinctions than diets, including the concomitant table manners. But Hermes' culinary 'status aparte' is only one exponent of the universal singularity of his 'Sitz im Leben'. His deviant addiction to mixing up human and divine codes far transcends his interest in foodstuff. In vase paintings he is often depicted as leading a sacrificial victim in a procession or bringing sacrifice himself (*LIMC* 796–822), thus playing the human, in his most essentially human role. More generally, Hermes nearly always acts in a human manner, not—like other gods—relying on autonomous and innate divine power or qualities. To actualize his typical abilities such as working magic, making himself invisible, moving swiftly to and fro, and practising his—modest—oracular capacities, he needs *tools* just as a mortal would:[183] a magic rod, his magical hood, the winged shoes, the bees. The hymn gives an explicit account of the gradual acquisition of these instruments.

His sole truly immanent and innate quality, the only one with which he was born as again the hymn so emphatically sketches, is best illustrated by his contribution to the construction of Pandora: a shameless mind, lies and crafty words, and a deceitful disposition (Hes. *E.* 67–78). In more positive terms, it is his *metis*, a quality indispensable for socio-economic survival. It implies cunning, eloquence and, if need be, theft, cheating, even including swearing a false oath and getting away with it. Versatile, that is how Hermes advertises himself in the long passage in Ar. *Plut.* 1100–1170, where the starving god, deploring the loss of all the goodies he used to receive from his human worshippers, tries to persuade them to accept him as a fellow-inhabitant of their world (ἀλλὰ ξύνοικον, πρὸς θεῶν, δέξασθέ με). He lists the (human) qualities in which he can be useful to his mortal companions, as *strophaios* (door guardian); as *empolaios* (businessman), as *dolios* (deceiver), as *hegemonios* (guide), as *enagonios* (president of the games). The

[183] The gods' need for such typically human tools were of course grist for the mill of Christian criticism. See for several testimonies: Ch. V n. 128.

reaction of his discussion partner is: 1164: "How good is it to have so many epithets" (ὡς ἀγαθόν ἐστ' ἐπωνυμίας πολλάς ἔχειν), after which Hermes is accepted as *synoikos*. It is his versatility as expressed in his polyonymy that earns him his living among mortal men. *Polytropos* in ancient Greek,[184] *poneros* in modern Greek,[185] that is Hermes, a model for his mortal analogon.[186]

May we claim to have discovered the 'essential' Hermes? No, we may not for such a Hermes did not exist. Many different divine persons might shelter under one name as we saw in our first chapter. And Hermes is no exception. Just as Zeus Meilichios was not the same as Zeus Basileus, so was the Hermes Chthonios, known from curse tablets and funerary inscriptions in Thessaly[187] with his fixed abode in the underworld, another person than the Hermes *pantokrator* that we shall meet in the next chapter. What *we* have found is the 'little Hermes', largely disregarded in modern scholarship, but very much alive in the everyday imagery and experience of ancient Greeks. They appreciated him as the prototypical companion of man: *hetairos*, a temporary fellow-dweller according to legend and myth, a welcome table mate in legend and cult, a permanent and loyal house-mate—*theos geiton*[188]—in the cultic shape of the herm. As a

---

[184] Hermes is often compared with Odysseus: W.G. Thalmann, *Conventions of Form and Thought in Early Greek Epic Poetry* (Baltimore 1984) 174 ff.; C.A. Sowa, *Traditional Themes and the Homeric Hymns* (Chicago 1984) 161–166; P. Pucci, *Odysseus Polutropos. Intertextual Readings in the Odyssey and the Iliad* (Ithaca 1987) 23–26; Clay 1989, 100. The term *polytropos* occurs twice as an epithet of Odysseus in *Od.* 1.1; 10.330 (the last time as spoken by Hermes), and twice of Hermes in his hymn, 13 and 439. Cf. Pucci *o.c.* index s.v. On the implications of its metrical position: G. Nagy, *Greek Mythology and Poetics* (Ithaca – London 1990) 34 f. Cf. S. Goldhill, *The Poet's Voice. Essays on Poetics and Greek Literature* (Cambridge 1991) 3–5, espec. 3: "it is a defining aspect of Odysseus' wiliness that he is the master of tricky language (and Hermes [….] is the divinity associated particularly with deceitful communication ….)."

[185] On this notion in modern Greek: P. Walcot, Continuity and Tradition, *G&R* 43 (1996) 176 n. 7.

[186] M. Detienne and J.-P Vernant, *Les ruses de l'intelligence. La mètis des Grecs* (Paris 1974) 48 ff. illuminatively connect *and* oppose the characters of the *polytropos* and the *ephemerios*. Both are marked by rapid changes in the flow of events, but the first is master and plays with the circumstances, the second is subject and plaything. What *we* have discovered is that Hermes is both, which makes him all the more human.

[187] A. Avagianou, Ἑρμῆι Χθονίωι. Θρησκεία καὶ ἄνθρωπος στὴ Θεσσαλία, in: *idem* (ed.), *Λατρεῖες στὴν 'περιφέρεια' τοῦ ἀρχαίου ἑλληνικοῦ κόσμου*, (Athens 2002) 65–111 [*SEG* 52, 546; EBGR 2003, no. 7]. On Hermes Chthonios see: Rückert 1998, 168–176.

[188] See Chapter I, p. 136.

herm he is also the trusted counsellor at the doorstep, omnipresent and visible in the human world. The only well-developed member of his body not sufficing to compensate the lack of all others, the god may create a suggestion of helplessness, in the fable playing the dupe or the plaything, as—not yet troubled by any bodily handicap—he was willing to do already in Homeric scenes. But, on the other hand, he is also the resourceful survivor who will always re-emerge through his ingenious guile. In myth and fable a—not always successful—distributor of equal parts, in real life the god of the *hermaia* becomes a dispenser of unexpected bits of luck in human life. In sum: to say that Hermes is the most human among the Olympians would be an understatement. It would make him an extreme on a sliding scale, for, indeed, no god can live without a fair dash of human features, affects, psychology and physiology, as we shall discuss in the next chapter. Hermes, however, is different. Both in cultic reality and in various descriptions of his presence in the human world he seems to *transmute into* a human being, fellow human and fellow sufferer, if the reader will condone these terms coined in recent Christian theology.

If it is true in general—as I believe it is—that, in the words of Paul Veyne quoted before, "a worshipper who made a vow in pious affection did not think of the mythological biography of the god to whom he prayed for assistance. But if questioned he would speak on this mythical aspect," then it is *eminently* true for Hermes. In the material adduced in the present chapter there is practically no trace of the magician, the herdsman, the psychopompos, only a few of the *kerux*, the thief. Even his central function of intermediary between divine and human worlds, as in his roles of messenger of the gods, revealer of divine knowledge, intermediary in sacrificial ritual, though always available on demand, are curiously underexposed. These aspects are not denied but remain out of range. To find them in more explicit elaboration one must consult different types of evidence and discourse: the more fancy vase paintings with mythological themes, particularly the ones with groups of gods, literary genres such as tragedy, philosophy and most of all mythology.

This is once more—and for the last time—best illustrated by a charming picture of hungry Hermes in the same piece of literature where we found the god at the table of a herdsman. In the fifth book of the *Odyssey* Zeus sends Hermes to Kalypso. The goddess (expressly called so 92; 97) regales him with a dish of nektar and ambrosia. Hermes tells her that his trip over the seas had been less than pleasant since

there is no city of mortals who offer to the gods sacrifice and choice hekatombs. So: hungry again, but in this context quite satisfied with a genuine Olympian repast even though he still does not get his sniff of burnt hekatombs. After his departure Kalypso places Odysseus on the chair that Hermes has left, places all kinds of food for him "that *mortal men* eat," but helps herself to nektar and ambrosia (195–200). The poet saw fit to make clear distinctions here. This time, contrary to everything we have observed in the present chapter, we do not see a god descending into the world of men, but we perceive the world of gods in which a mortal being has intruded. And the culinary rules are adjusted to the situation.

The Homeric Hymn, belonging to the realm of myth, naturally pays attention to the most important of Hermes' functions and roles. Yet, this does not seem to be its central message. The focus is not on 'function', nor even on 'meaning' but on character. And in this respect the hymn is deeply affected and informed by the nature of Hermes in everyday social life as we have encountered it. Born 'in between', from the union between the father of gods and men and the unmarried maiden (*nymphe*) Maia, a baby in a barren grotto, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a cradle, the god works miracles on the first day of his life. Though aspiring to a place of honour on Olympus he behaves as a human being throughout the hymn, and, after having obtained his recognition as a god, returns to the world where he was born, the world of men, to perform human tasks like herding and bartering, and "consorting with all mortals and immortals." *In that order*. In Ar. *Plutus* 1148, the bewildered Karion asks: "Do you indeed wish to leave the gods and settle here below?" (ἀπολιπὼν τοὺς θεοὺς ἐνθάδε μενεῖς;). And, yes, that is what Hermes indeed desires. "Consorting with all mortals and immortals", yet, ultimately "settling here below." The unpublished Italiote situla from Foggia that we mentioned earlier, shows the god Hermes standing on a chariot, carrying a herm—the image in which his closest companionship with human beings was most manifest—in his arms.[189] This seems to me a perfect ideogram of the god Hermes.

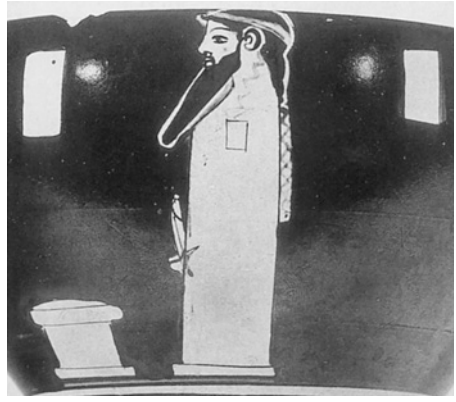
[189] See above n. 98.

10

11

12

13



CHAPTER FIVE

GOD
THE QUESTION OF DIVINE OMNIPOTENCE

I make all eggs productive except the infertile eggs.
God Amun in a Coptic spell

Whatever moment of an uttered expression one deals with, it will always be determined by the real conditions of this act of utterance, and before all else by the closest social situation. A verbal communication can never be understood and explained outside of this link with the concrete situation.

M. Bakhtin

1. God: Self and Other

1. *Self*

The robin who thinks he owns our garden is hungry. She taps at the window. "Listen, the robin wants to come in, he seeks our company," says my wife. "Yes she wants a bite of this or that" say I. And we are happy: if even a robin loves us, this surely proves us to be nice people. My problem, however, is that actually I know better since I read a few books written by that terrifying race of scholars generally referred to as behaviourists. There I learned that our interpretation of the robin's motives is a typical instance of 'anthropomorphism': "the ascription of human mental experiences and motives to animals."[1] Even if all contemporary students are aware these days that anthropomorphic thinking has no place in a scientific study of animal behaviour[2] and even if,

[1] J. Asquith, The Inevitability and Utility of Anthropomorphism in Description of Primate Behaviour, in: R. Harré & V. Reynolds (edd.), *The Meaning of Primate Signals* (Cambridge 1984) 138–176, espec. 138.

[2] Nevertheless, time and again, under a more fashionable label of 'cognitive ethology', a new claim of conscious thinking in animals is being proposed as for instance in the works by D.R. Griffin, including, among many others, *Animal Thinking* (Cambridge MA 1984). His new 'evangelism' is maliciously summarized by Kennedy 1992, 12: "if animals behaving in all those apparently intelligent ways were human, they would probably (though not necessarily) be conscious." N. Tinbergen, *The Study of Instinct* (Oxford 1951) 5, took the view that it was idle either to claim or to deny the

consequently, they are confident that their own use of anthropomorphic language is purely metaphorical, yet as Kennedy 1992 compellingly argues,

> we could not abandon it even if we wished to. Besides, we *do* not wish to. It is dinned into us culturally from earliest childhood. It has presumably also been 'pre-programmed' into our hereditary make-up by natural selection (……) Hence, no matter how excellent and pure our stated intentions may be, the words will unconsciously tend to make us interpret animal behaviour in human terms.[3]

The only remaining safety valve is never to forget that "a monkey may have abstract concepts, motives, beliefs and desires, but her mental states are not accessible to her: *she does not know what she knows.*"[4] And I hate the behaviourists for thus dis-romanticizing the endearing motives of our robin. And kept it secret from my wife.

Circa two thousand five hundred years ago Xenophanes (Fr. 15) made his famous statement:

> If horses or oxen or lions had hands and could make drawings with their hands and accomplish such works as men, horses would draw the figures

---

existence of subjective phenomena in animals, because we do not have evidence either way. Cf. M.S. Dawkins, *Animal Suffering. The Science of Animal Welfare* (London 1980) 102: "No amount of measurements can tell us what animals are actually experiencing. Their private mental experiences, if they have them, remain inaccessible to direct observation." An additional complication is presented by Wittgenstein's thesis: "If a lion could speak, we would not be able to understand him."

[3] Kennedy 1992, 89, who himself argues: "In fact all students of animal behaviour use our own mental processes as models to 'explain' the behaviour in terms of intentions." At p. 24 f. he lists a number of statements by various ethologists and psychologists of similar import, including the one quoted in the text above, and "Whether we will or not we must be anthropomorphic in the notions we form of what takes place in the mind of an animal." Similarly, with respect to taxonomy, one might wonder: "How could we think about how animals relate to one another except on the basis of our own relationships?" (thus M. Douglas, The Pangolin Revisited: A New Approach to Animal Symbolism, in: R. Willis (ed.), *Signifying Animals: Human Meaning in the Natural World* (London – New York 1990) 33. Experiments described in an online pre-publication of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 12 July 2010 show that the tendency of ascribing anthropomorphic behaviour to animals (and robots or gadgets) increases in proportion with their unpredictability, and hence may be explained as satisfying the need for control.

[4] D.L. Cheney & R. Seyfarth, *How Monkeys See the World: Inside the mind of another species* (Chicago 1990) 312. Note in passing that monkeys as a race are "she," just like your new sports car.

> of gods as similar to horses, and oxen as similar to oxen, and they would lend them a physical appearance like their own.[5]

This theriomorphic projection was intended to illustrate and censure the idea that: "mortals suppose that gods are born, wear their own clothes and have a voice and body" (Fr. 14), adding that "it was Homer and Hesiod who attributed to the gods all sorts of things which are matters of reproach and censure among men: theft, adultery, and mutual deceit" (Fr. 11). So at least one Greek, and not the least as we have seen in Ch. III, agreed with modern behaviourists in a magnificent hyperbole.[6] *And* he unconsciously provided the most decisive illustration of the anthropomorphic trap by defining his own radically transcendent, non-anthropomorphic god as follows: "As a whole he sees, as a whole he thinks, and as a whole he hears." These are all very anthropoid qualities of an apparently male deity.

In my words then: if by nature and nurture man cannot but project anthropomorphic motives, affects and emotions onto animal behaviour, although animals like our robin present themselves in very unhuman appearances, how infinitely more natural, self-evident and unavoidable is the anthropomorphization of gods, whom man created in his own image, and who, whenever visually available, as for instance in an epiphany, tend to corroborate rather than to falsify that image?[7]

---

[5] It also can be done the other way round: Xenophon makes gods design animals; in this way he can explain why the gods put a tuft of hair on horses' brows and gave donkeys long ears (*Eq.* 5.6). All this to support his theology based on the argument of design. Cf. R.C.T. Parker, The Origins of Pronoia: A Mystery, in: *Apodosis. Essays Presented to Dr. W.W. Cruickshank* (London 1992) 84–94, espec. 86.

[6] As did Aristotle *Pol.*1252b26–28, arguing that mankind conceives the gods anthropomorphically in a twofold sense: not just in terms of their forms (*eide*) but also in terms of their lifestyle (*bioi*), while Aristotle's own opinion differs considerably, as in *On the Universe* 397b10–401b24. In *Pol.* 1326a32 he envisages god as a 'divine power' (*theia dunamis*) that 'holds everything together' as the informing principle of the kosmos.

[7] In visions or epiphanies, gods may manifest themselves in many different forms but as a rule they appear in human shape (Versnel 1987). What ancient Greek comedy writers did by intentionally over-anthropomorphising gods (and thus making them objects of ridicule as we saw in Chapter IV) is very much comparable with what ethologists do when taking the 'intentional stance', i.e. pretending, for the sake of argument, that an animal can think or feel as we do. Kennedy's label 'mock anthropomorphism' makes the resemblance even more obvious, especially when he adds: "The vital distinction between the (unconscious) projection of human experiences to animals and the intentional mock anthropomorphism must always be kept in mind, for it is rather easy to confuse them."

We no longer need Feuerbach for these insights since Christian theologians of our time heartily agree.[8] We simply are unable to conceive a completely non-anthropomorphic god since we cannot speak about him/her in non-anthropomorphic terms.[9] One key problem is language.[10] Religion speaks human language; so does man when he

[8] E.g. J. Werbick, art. 'Gott', in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* IV (1995) 868: "Der Versuch von Gott zu sprechen, indem man ihm Eigenschaften beilegt, steht seit Feuerbach unter Projektionsverdacht. Dieser Verdacht ist zumindenst darin im Recht, daß Sprechen von Gott immer auch Sprechen von Menschen ist: von den Grenzen menschlicher Seins-und Wesenverwirklichung, die negiert werden müssen, wo man von Gott zu sprechen versucht." The problem however is that the requirement "negiert werden müssen" (must be ignored) in this phrase, cannot be fulfilled in religious practice. In current anthropology St.E. Guthrie, The origin of an Illusion, in: St.D. Glazier (ed.), *Anthropology of Religion: A Handbook* (Westport CT 1997) 489–504, forcefully argues that *all* religion is a result of anthropomorphism and therefore illusory.

[9] So already Nägelsbach 1840, 11: "Die Forderung des Menschengeistes in Absicht aus das Wesen seines Gottes geht weiter, als sein Vermögen, derselben durch Gebilde seiner eigenen Phantasie zu genügen, und so finden wir denn die göttliche Persönlichkeit, so hoch sie dem Glauben nach über der menschlichen steht, gleichwohl der Erscheining nach mit allen Schranken und Mängeln irdischer Natur behaftet." Ancient experiments on their way to entirely abstract deities include Xenophanes (see Ch. III), Empedocles and Protagoras. Th. Korteweg, The Reality of the Invisible, in: Vermaseren 1979, espec. 66–70, hits the mark, when he considers this a "very dangerous tendency," arguing: "The problem is not simply that it is difficult to imagine a god who is so utterly unlike anything we meet in the world, but rather that it is difficult to imagine such a god at all." He quotes G. Devereux: "another attribution of perfection to god is another step towards atheism." Already in antiquity the Xenophanean thesis that god cannot be imagined in the likeness of man has been used as an argument for atheism (Sext. Emp. *adv. phys.* 1.137–190). G.M. Jantzen, *God's World, Gods' Body* (London 1984) even argues, on grounds of analogy, that the Christian God *must* have a bodily existence, since "if there were no such analogy, how could we ever know anything of God?" Cf. below n. 167 on Kuitert. Contrarily, B. Miller, *A Most Unlikely God. A Philosophical Enquiry into the Nature of God* (Notre Dame, Ind. 1996) exposes the absurdity of attempts to describe in human language God's perfectness and sketches his radical unimaginable otherness.

[10] And, as a good second, of course, visual imagery. On the issue of anthropomorphic imagery of gods Cicero *ND* 1.77 remarks that it is not easy for an author or a visual artist "to capture gods in imitations of different forms (then the human ones) (*non facile agentis aliquid et molientis deos in aliarum formarum imitatione servare*), adding that perhaps the opinion that in the eyes of man nothing seems to be more beautiful than man may also have contributed. Hdt. 1.131 f., in an attempt to explain the curious otherness of Persian sacrifice—no god's portion, no roasting, no communal meal as well as the absence of temples and statues—already made an appeal to the principle of anthropomorphism: "This comes, so it seems to me, from not believing the gods to be in the likeness of men (ἀνθρωποφυέας) as the Greeks do."

speaks about or prays to his gods[11] and so do the gods[12] (mostly) when they grant an answer.[13] *And* so do classical scholars. One of the greatest, Arthur Darby Nock (*Essays* II 549) summarized it in a celebrated expression: "The gods were larger Greeks" (*kreittones* would be the preferred Greek term). However, he did not stop there but added: "yes, but between gods and man there was a line." So let us now cross that line and turn from anthropomorphism to allomorphism, from "self" to "other."

---

[11] Especially in the context of prayer anthropomorphism hits home. For instance in the epistolary style of prayers to a god, which end with ἔρρωσο (lit. "fare well/take care," for the secular use of which see: R. Buzón, *Die Briefe der Ptolemäerzeit: Ihre Struktur und ihre Formeln* [Diss. Heidelberg 1984] 25 f., 70, 114, 173, 243, and for the communication with a god: Versnel 1981a, 833 f. with more examples). Others may open with the wish that the divine addressee "may be healthy and live long" (F. Jones Bliss & R.A. Stewart Macalister, *Excavations in Palestine* [London 1902], no. 35). Fifth-century Greek curse tablets have comparable epistolary expressions. Even more human are the expressions of anger and bad wishes to gods that have failed to fulfil a prayer. See: Versnel 1981a, 37–42, and add: A.D. Nock, Review Bidez-Cumont, Les Mages Hellénisés, *JRS* 30 (1940) 191–198, esp. 194 f. For the Roman period see: F. Cumont, *L'Égypte des astrologues* (Bruxelles 1937) 136 f.; Veyne 1986, espec. 260 f. Even if Scheer 2001, 53 ff. is right in discarding Xerxes' flagellation of the Hellespont, her attempt to save her Greeks from such improper behaviour vis-à-vis the gods by disqualifying all other testimonies is not successful.

[12] *And* so did animals (sometimes) in Greek and Roman ears. Th. Fögen, Antike Zeugnisse zu Kommunikationsformen von Tieren, *AuA* 53 (2007) 39–75, in a very interesting and well documented article, concludes (71): "Ein höherer affektiver Bezug des Menschen zum Tier führt in der Regel zu einer stärkeren Anthropomorphisierung und zugleich zu der Zuschreibung einer 'Sprachbegabung'." Cf. recently: M. Bettini, *Voci: Antropologia sonora del mondo antico. Saggi, 982* (Torino 2008), with a central focus on 'voices' of animals.

[13] Gould 1985, 16: "divinity understands Greek, even if it is another question whether he speaks it." Greek prayer of course is grounded on the first proposition. To the adorant in a prayer situation this is self-evident. It does not clash with mythical notions of a language of the gods, for which see below n. 26. As witness the written votive prayers and curse tablets the gods can also read (Versnel 2002). Writing, however, is a different matter: A. Henrichs, Writing Religion: Inscribed Texts, Ritual Authority, and the Religious Discourse of the Polis, in: H. Yunis (ed.), *Written Texts and the Rise of Literate Culture in Ancient Greece* (Houston 2003) 38–58: espec. 38: "Olympian gods do not appear to be literate, or if they are, they do not flaunt their literacy. In fact, they hide it." But see the important exceptions at pp. 38 f. Cf. already M. Detienne, *L'écriture d'Orphée* (Paris 1989) 104: "Les dieux grecs sont de parfaits analphabètes: ils vont rester illettrés jusqu'à l'âge hellénistique." M. Beard, Writing and Religion: Ancient Literacy and the Function of the Written Word in Roman Religion, in: J. Humphrey (ed.), *Literacy in the Roman World*. JRA Suppl. 3 (Ann Arbor 1991) 35–58, espec. 49–53: "The written words of the gods," refers to oracles, which were not regarded as 'manuscripts' by the gods themselves. So-called *Himmelsbriefe* (letters from heaven) are a different matter (J. Schneider, 'Brief', par. 5 'Himmelsbriefe', *RAC* 2 [1954] 572 f.). There is no evidence of such written messages 'from above' prior to the 2nd c. AD. Paus. 10.38.13 is the earliest testimony.

2. *Other*

I am not the first to mention gods and beasts in the same breath. One of the most celebrated notions introduced by the École de Paris, especially by Marcel Detienne, is that according to the Greeks man's status was "between beasts and gods" ("entre bêtes et dieux"). He had a predecessor in Aristotle, who, in his *Ethica Nicomachaea*, often refers to gods and beasts as the two opposite extremes defining human existence. If, then, (some) Greeks define their own status by contrasting it with those of beasts and gods, it is perhaps not too adventurous to follow their lead and see what happens. If the first part of this chapter drew the attention to the likeness of god and man—'god in man's image'—, the French expression 'entre bêtes et dieux' turns the spotlight on the differences: god and man as antithesis. And with this we have arrived at another recent hype, this time not borrowed from zoology but from (structural) anthropology.

Over the last two or three decades many students of Greek and Roman Antiquity have become sojourners in *another* world, a world in which 'the Other' is the focus: the eccentric has become the centre of interest. We have briefly touched upon this new wave in the Introduction to this book and this is the right place to return to the topic. In recent scholarship we have learned that Scythians, Persians, women (Greek or non-Greek), slaves, sectarians, magicians and many other 'others' turn out to have been cultural constructs in many respects, 'existing' only or mainly in Greek imagination. As a cultural construct 'the Other' is, so it is claimed, a reverse reflection of the self. If, then, ethnic, social or gender stereotypes provide only very doubtful information on the groups they claim to represent, they have on the other hand lots to say about the culture that has created them. In other words: self-identity is essentially defined and expressed—hence can be recovered—through the discourse of otherness. The new approach has yielded revealing and important new insights.[14]

---

[14] One of the results, as we have seen in the Introduction, is Paul Cartledge's *The Greeks. A Portrait of Self and Others* (Oxford 1993) which consistently takes its departure from the image of the other to arrive at the self. I refer the reader to the bibliography in his book for further relevant literature. It should be noted that the notion of 'the other' and its social function are a hot issue in all kinds of cultural studies. I particularly refer to the fascinating work on 'urban legends' that "prey on the fears of modern life," as represented in such studies as P. Turner, *I Heard it Through the Grapevine: Rumor in African-American Culture* (Berkeley – Los Angeles 1993); J.H.

Now, if images of foreign cultures, women, slaves, though having a visible and tangible existence, are for a large part constructs of otherness, we may repeat the question: how much more are the gods, who originated as, and have never attained a status beyond, pure construction? Indeed, gods can be regarded as the very exponent of otherness, as, long before the recent trend of cultural 'otherness', was first suggested by Rudolf Otto with his definition of the religious *mysterium tremendum* as "das ganz Andere,"[15] widely acclaimed and adopted by both historians of religion,[16] and Christian theologians, most particularly Karl Barth, who defined the Christian god as "der ganz Andere."

Gods are 'larger Greeks'—Gods are 'radical others'; these contrasting qualifications will not come as a surprise to the reader. If so, why then do we have so much trouble in accepting or even considering the implications and consequences of this ambiguity? Let us turn now to some corollaries of what everybody knows, but which, if realized at all, are curiously undervalued.

3. *Self and other*

Influential theories, like influential people, have their drawbacks. If this is true in general, it is particularly true for structuralism, so much so that the École de Paris[17] itself has now definitely renounced this once so proud sobriquet. It has been said many times, loud and clear: the binary oppositions on which Lévi-Strauss' dogmatic structuralism was constructed, is a wolf in sheep's clothing. Charmed by its seductive transparency the reader forgets to reflect on its implications. The opposition nature-culture, though obvious to our eyes and brilliantly elaborated in structuralism studies, may become a *reductio ad absurdum* of the endless variety of oppositions that may be implied. So, or even more so is the opposition other-self. The concept of 'Otherness' certainly has presented us with a productive hermeneutic tool in the study of cultural identity. But it is about time now to take a step back for reconsideration. What we have learned is that otherness is

---

Brunvand, *The Truth Never Stands in the Way of a Good Story* (Univ. Illinois Press 2001).

[15] R. Otto, *Das Heilige* (Breslau 1922[9]) 28–34.

[16] "Thus the first affirmation we can make about the Object of Religion is that it is a highly exceptional and extremely impressive *'Other'* ": G. van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Imagination* (Princeton 1986 = London 1938, 1964[2]) 23.

[17] On the general use and meaning of this sobriquet see Ch. I n. 41.

inconceivable without its opposite, 'the self' (and *vice versa*). But what, in our enthusiasm, we may have failed to realize is that the construction of the 'Other' cannot function, indeed cannot *exist*, without a generous dash of 'self' in its imagery. Let us illustrate this with a famous episode in the ninth book of the Odyssey:

The Homeric Cyclopes, especially in the person of Polyphemos, are portrayed as anti-Greeks and anti-human: they do not know markets, political decision making, councils, social forms of organization, ships, religion. They are bestial cannibals, and even when they cannot lay hands on an occasional Greek washed ashore they still remain "eaters of flesh and drinkers of milk."[18] Clearly, these are raw materials for the construction of otherness. All the same it is to be borne in mind that Cyclopes *are* no beasts[19] but only share a number of frightening features with beasts. For the rest, they boast a fairly recognizable human-like livelihood, for which they are equipped with legs, arms, ears, all of gigantic seize it is true, but of human form; they enjoy visual faculty—note that the traditional trademark of their otherness, namely the dramatically reduced number of their eyes, is never mentioned *explicitly* in Homer's account and turns up only at the very moment that it is contextually required. Though, on the one hand, Polyphemos is very 'other' in not even cooking or roasting his Greek victims for dinner, with his other hand he does debone them by carving them with a knife (μελειστὶ ταμών, *Od*. 9.291).

Did the Poet sleep here? If he did, he dreamt a very meaningful dream, since it reveals that he could not think the other without lapsing into the self from time to time. As to the Cyclopes, their most obvious positive quality, so obvious indeed that it is not noticed at all initially, is their excellent working knowledge of Greek. They are fluent in that language—that is: all other Cyclopes are, whereas Polyphemos must have cancelled his Greek course just before tackling the indefinite pronoun. No element of this Homeric excursus has received a

---

[18] B. Shaw, Eaters of Flesh, Drinkers of Milk: The Ancient Mediterranean Ideology of the Pastoral Nomad, *Anc.Soc.* 13/14 (1982–3) 5–31.

[19] F. Hartog, *Mémoire d'Ulysse, Récits sur la frontière en Grèce ancienne* (Paris 1996) 127: "Quant à Polyphème, sauvage entre les sauvages, Cyclope bestial, il n'est pas "bête." The latter word may of course also mean 'stupid', but as Hartog continues to explain, the Cyclope is not entirely stupid, especially as for instance indicated by his little joking remarks on Odysseus: "you are *nèpios*." More generally extreme 'otherness' is often marked by both barbarian negative and 'utopian' peaceful aspects. See: Versnel 1993, 106–109.

more stepmotherly treatment. If noticed at all, scholars at most assign it a narratological inevitability: Germans in an English war film communicate in English which they speak fluently albeit with a funny accent. As for the Homeric epic, everybody speaks Greek: Trojans,[20] Phaeacians, gods, nymphs. Is it a negligible feature for that reason? In many respects it is, in one respect it is highly meaningful: better than anything else it illustrates that the Other cannot be imagined nor communicated without the aid of elements of the self. And the most revealing thing is that as soon as otherness requires a reminder you can use the self by corrupting it and making a pun on a pronoun.[21]

There is no exception to this amalgamation of self and other, simply because the complete other is beyond imagination: it cannot be thought. Herodotus, an acknowledged specialist in otherness,[22] pictures two extremes of his extended ethnographic excursuses, one in the far East of Northern Eurasia the other in the extreme South-West of Northern Africa. They are very odd indeed: in the East we find people with goat-feet and others with one eye, to the South-West dog-headed creatures or headless ones with eyes in their breasts, not to mention "wild women and men": all very 'other', yet never without ingredients of the self. 'The others', including gods, are always a mixed race boasting features that are completely different, but never devoid of traits that are similar to ours. After all even for Herodotus' ultimate 'others' the iron law holds that in order to be able to carry your head

---

[20] Of course, literary texts may hint at differences in language as for instance *Il.* 2. 867. In *H.Aphrodite* the goddess, in the shape of a mortal woman, tells Anchises that she had been brought up by a Trojan nurse and so "I know your speech well besides my own." Cf. Aesch. *Choeph.* 564; Soph. fr. 176, but as Groeneboom *ad Septem* 166–170 remarks it is never played out as an issue on the stage until Aristophanes' *Acharnenses* and *Lysistrata*. H. Mackie, *Talking Trojan: Speech and Community in the Iliad* (New York – London 1996) discusses different issues.

[21] Very comparable is a little scene in Aristophanes' *Birds* 198 ff. When Peisetairos asks Tereus who will be the one to reveal his plan to the birds, Tereus tells him that he can do it himself, since the birds have learned Greek. Without this little intermezzo Hellenophone birds—being nothing more than an unavoidable narrative device—would not have attracted undue attention. By the mere fact of its mentioning—that is by its being put into focus—, the absurdity becomes apparent and the effect is laughter.

[22] M. Rosellini & S. Saïd, Usages de femmes et autres *nomoi* chez les 'sauvages' d'Hérodote: essai de lecture structurale, *ASNP* III, 8 (1978) 949–1005; Hartog 1980; Shaw 1982, *o.c.* (above n. 18); W. Burkert, Herodot als Historiker fremder Religionen, in: *Hérodote et les peuples non grecs* (Entretiens Hardt 1990) 1–32; P. Cartledge, Herodotus and "the Other": a Meditation on Empire, *EMC* 9 (1990) 27–40; V. Gray, Herodotus and the Rhetoric of Otherness, *AJPh* 116 (1995) 185–211, on the rhetoric of male/female otherness in relation to the rhetoric of otherness of the royal barbarian.

under your arm, you need to have at least one head and one arm. It is due to its equivocality that the Other is interesting, "good to think," to use an expression particularly favoured by the Paris school.

But is there a system in this madness? Can we descry an economy in the application of the two opposites? Can we, if not predict, then at least comprehend the circumstances in which the self or the other will come to the fore respectively? In this chapter I hope to show we can—sometimes. The main thing one has to do is to check the rhetorical and argumentative requirements of a context and see how, in accordance with these different requirements elements of sameness and otherness will claim their alternative positions in reflection, imagery or narrative. Let us keep this in mind when we now return to the central theme of the present chapter: god.

4. *Gods: Self and other*

Gods are robins. Or worse. Robins exist without human initiative or intervention. They form one of the numerous live screens upon which man projects his human characteristics. Gods do not exist without man. They *are* projections because they are human creations. Hence, they are like mortals in form and behaviour. They are endowed with senses, they see, hear, eat, speak, sleep, make love, travel, act. They have emotions, affects, desires, including the fact that they suffer, are angry, are clement; they have a will. And they have vices: they cheat, lie, are jealous, and are utterly capricious. Everything exactly like their creators.[23] Greek gods, then, are "larger Greeks."

Gods are Others beyond expression. Being man's handiwork, they are desperate and ideal projections of hope and fear. Hence they are man's absolute opposites. They live 'easily', that is a utopian life, at ease, without toil or effort.[24] Worries do not trouble them. Not knowing disease, sorrow or weakness, they do not suffer. Death does not visit upon them. If they eat, it is not human food,[25] if they converse it is

[23] It is superfluous to adduce the evidence for all these features. Keyssner 1932, 127–135 provides an exhaustive list of the many different anthropomorphous divine elements, both physical and psychological, that occur in Greek hymns. Cf. also Rudhardt 1958, 56–59; 80–82; 85–90.

[24] "The easy living (ῥεῖα ζώοντες) gods are a foil to the mortals" (Burkert 1985, 122). On another, though related, meaning of ῥεῖα in the context of divine existence see below p. 422.

[25] On the ambiguities concerning divine food: W. Pötscher, Zum Problem der Speisen der Götter in der homerischen Poesie, *ZAnt* 48 (1998) 92–104.

in the language of the gods.[26] Being omnipresent they need not travel, being all-seeing they are not in need of human information.

All of these characteristics, the anthropomorphous and the allomorphous, are too well-known to need ample documentation. Hackneyed and worn-out, they have become banal. But this banality becomes interesting when we notice that although both lists are true, practically each item of the first is flatly contradicted by one of the second. With a variation on an expression of Dilthey,[27] we might conclude that gods are condemned to this schizophrenic nature of being both fundamentally different and "of the same race as man."[28] Had they been only different, they would have been both inconceivable and

---

[26] On language of the gods, especially in Homer: A. Heubeck, Die homerische Göttersprache, *WJA* 4 (1949/50) 197–218; C. Watkins, Language of Gods and Language of Men, in: J. Puhvel (ed.), *Myth and Law among the Indo-Europeans*: *Studies in Indo-European Comparative Mythology* (Berkeley London 1970); J.S. Clay, The *Planktai* and *Moly*: Divine Naming and Knowing in Homer, *Hermes* 100 (1972) 127–131; C. de Lamberterie, Grec homérique môly: étymologie et poétique, *LALIES* 6 (1988) 129–138. J.S. Clay, *Demas* and *Aude*: The Nature of Divine Transformation in Homer, *Hermes* 102 (1974) 129–136, shows that when the gods adopt both "voice and appearance" (*demas* and *aude*) in order to take part in human affairs, where *aude* is typically "human speech," this proves that the gods are taken to use a divine language for their own divine communication. Cf. on the same issue: A. Ford, *Homer. The Poetry of the Past* (Ithaca – London 1992) 172–197. M. Detienne, Langue des dieux ou des dieux dans le langue, *Ann. EPHE sc. rel.* 101 (1992–3) 219–222, discusses the original linguistic community of gods and men, and the consequences of its interruption for human prayer. So does M.-C. Leclerc, *La parole chez Hésiode. A la recherche de l'harmonie perdue* (Paris 1993). More generally on language of the gods: H. Güntert, *Von der Sprache der Göttter und Geister* (Halle 1921); F. Bader, *La langue des dieux, ou l'hermétisme des poètes indo-européens* (Pisa 1989), and her related papers in *LEC* (1990) 3–26; 221–245; *REG* 103 (1990) 383–408. Cf. B. Gladigow, Götternamen und Name Gottes, in: H. von Stietencron (ed.), *Der Name Gottes* (Düsseldorf 1975) esp. 24. I keep silent about late antique philosophical theories on divine language and names.

[27] W. Dilthey, as quoted in the Introduction to this book (above p. 15). Gould 1985, 4, compares religion with language and quotes E. Sapir: "The fact of the matter is that the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The world in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached." Gould adds that for language we could read religion, but admits "that this thesis is vulnerable to *reductio ad absurdum* arguments, to the effect that it makes impossible communication between members of different cultures."

[28] Vernant, 1980, 107: "Thus, within the religious thought of the Greeks, there is as it were a tension between two poles. Sometimes it postulates a divine world which is relatively close to men.….At other times it imagines a more clear-cut divide and a greater gap between gods and men.…."; Oudemans & Lardinois 1987, 93: "Greek gods were at an immense distance from mortals and at the same time dangerously close." Cf. Burkert 1985, 183; Buxton 1994, 146–149.

incommunicado; had they been only and completely 'in the image of man', they would have been neither gods nor interesting. Burkert 1996a, 6 f., distinguishes between two principal characteristics of religion in general: it is both ineffable in the sense that it deals with the unverifiable, the nonevidential, the nonobvious, *and* manifest through interaction and communication. He concludes: "In fact, religious communication always focuses in two directions, toward the unseen and toward the contemporary social situation." This determines the ambiguity of gods. For, indeed, the truly crucial thing—to be continuously kept in mind and yet often ignored—is that gods unite complete sets of anthropomorphic and allomorphic characteristics, which are all available on demand according to situation and context. The two may alternate and shift, either of the two may suddenly emerge or vanish even within one brief passage. They also may be confronted with each other, as especially in comedy.

The most excessively anthropomorphic account of the gods, namely the *Iliad* of Homer, who, according to [Longinus], *de Subl.* 9.8: "as far as he can, has made men gods and gods men," in one and the same passage pictures Diomedes wounding the goddess Aphrodite with his spear, causing her divine blood (*ichôr*) to stream from the wound and making her suffer (*Il.* 5.339 ff.),[29] *and* receiving the warning from Apollo:

---

[29] In order to make this (as well as the comparable [mal]treatment of Ares later in Book 5) possible Athena had to confer upon him the capacity of recognizing the gods (*Il.* 5.127–132). Note *ibid.* 340–343 the significantly incoherent treatment of divine blood and the importance of not partaking of human bread and wine in this context. See: Nägelsbach 1840, 40–43. On the brinkmanship between mortal and immortal aspects of Aphrodite's bleeding, see Sineux 2006, 128 f. and the literature mentioned there. Ø. Andersen, A Note on the 'Mortality' of Gods in Homer, *GRBS* 22 (1981) 323–328, convincingly explains the several 'near-death' experiences of gods (especially in *Il.* 5), as paradigmatic *ad hoc* possibilities, similes of human acting and suffering in the Iliad. For the special case of Ares see: N. Loraux, Le corps vulnérable d'Arès, in: *Le Corps des dieux, Le temps de la réflexion* 7 (1986) 335–354. They are momentaneous and more or less isolated mythical insertions and should not be understood as systematic reflections on divine nature. Nor are gods always happy, especially not in the Iliad: 7.204; 8.33; 13.352; 18.54; 20.293; 24.105. See: Nägelsbach 1840, 23 f. On the contrast between mortal men and immortal gods in the Iliad: J. Griffin, The Divine Audience and the Religion of the Iliad, *CQ* 28 (1978) 1–22; *idem, Homer on Life and Death* (Oxford 1980), Ch. VI. On the fundamental differences between divine and human bodies: J.P. Vernant, Corps obscur, corps éclatant, *Le temps de la réflexion* 7 (1986) 19–45 (translated as: Mortals and Immortals: The Body of the Divine, in: Zeitlin 1991, 27–49).

> Bethink and yield. Do not aspire to be the equal of the gods. Because not of the same tribe (οὔ ποτε φῦλον ὁμοῖον) are immortals gods and earth-walking men (*Il.* 5.441 f.).[30]

Not by chance all three most quoted expressions bearing on difference and resemblance between human and divine are stubbornly reluctant to reveal their precise meaning: Hes. *Erga* 108: ὡς ὁμόθεν γεγάασιν θεοὶ θνητοί τ' ἄνθρωποι;[31] Heraklitos Fr. 62. ἀθάνατοι θνητοί, θνητοὶ ἀθάνατοι;[32] Pind. *Nem* 6.1. Ἓν ἀνδρῶν, ἓν θεῶν γένος, ἐκ μιᾶς δὲ πνέομεν ματρὸς ἀμφότεροι.[33]

5. *Some inferences*

What does all this mean? What are the implications? Perhaps first and foremost that we should be just a bit more circumspect with respect to devising universal markers of divinity. The standard ingredients to be found in text books may be summarized in the following definition: a god is a being who surpasses man in: 1) length of life: immortality, 2) comfort and joy, 3) knowledge of what takes place behind the scenes of life 4) power over nature and human life.[34] Many Greek authors

---

[30] Of course it is true that the two contrasting points of view are interconnected: "Precisely because of divine anthropomorphism it was necessary to stress the immortal-mortal boundary" (Bremmer 1994, 12). Especially in cases of punishment of *hybris* against and sex with gods, "the message is clear: the gap between god and humans is unbridgeable." My point, here, is that both points of view can be (simultaneously) valid: the idea that man can injure a god, and the notion that gods and men are unbridgeably divided.

[31] Where West replaces customary interpretations with the suggestion that men and gods "started on the same terms. The first men lived like the gods…"

[32] KRS 210: "very obscure: it evidently has some connection with the doctrine of opposites, but also suggests the deification of some souls."

[33] "One is the race of men, one is the race of the gods, but from one mother (Earth) do we both draw our breath. Yet a power wholly sundered holds us aloof, in that the one is a thing of naught, while for the other the brazen heaven abides as a sure abode forever. Nevertheless we have some likeness, either in power of mind (μέγαν νόον) or in nature (φύσιν) to the immortals, though we know not to what measure day by day in the watches of night fate has written that we should run."

[34] Thus a maximalist, inclusive, definition by P.A. Meijer, Philosophers, Intellectuals and Religion in Hellas, in: Versnel 1981a, 216–262, espec. 224. A minimalist definition can be found in Dodds 1965, 74: "In popular Greek tradition a god differed from a man chiefly in being exempt from death and in the supernatural power which this exemption conferred on him." Jost 1992, 18, in a more nuanced discussion, betrays the precariousness of defining what is a god: "Gods are persons, rarely concepts or abstractions. Their superhuman nature is apparent from their immortality (although they *are* born and exceptionally die); their appearance is human, but greater. They are not omnipresent, they come and go. They are never ill, cannot be wounded, are

agree on a fixed set of 'deificators', sometimes omitting one element or adding another. Hesiod's characteristics include "immortal and ageless, free from trouble, free from old age, for all time"[35] (*Th.* 940 ff.) and "with carefree heart, remote from toil and misery. Wretched old age did not affect them either, but with hands and feet ever unchanged they enjoyed themselves in feasting, beyond all ills" (*E.* 112, on heroes who live like gods).[36] This returns in Epicurus' summary: "All men are said to have a natural belief that the gods are immortal, sublimely happy."[37] The problem is that this may be taken as obviously true for *the* gods as a polythetic class, but that not all of these qualities apply to each individual god. More alarming is that it may be true for an individual god at one moment or in one context and untrue in another. Worse: it may even be true and untrue for one god in one and the same context. This can be demonstrated for practically any divine characteristic listed in our earlier survey, but I have chosen to illustrate it here by challenging one quality (or rather the lack of one quality) on which there seems to be a unanimous agreement, as outspoken as it is rare in modern scholarship. I mean the concept of omnipotence.

Vernant's definition quoted in our first chapter (p. 27) implies that the concept of omnipotence is incompatible with Greek polytheism. He postulates a "strict demarcation of the forces and their hierarchical counterbalancing. This excludes the categories of omnipotence, omni-

---

invisible." On the relevant views of intellectuals of the imperial period see: MacMullen 1981, 73–78.

[35] The essential combination of immortality and agelessness is an issue in a number of myths and popular stories, as for instance in *H. Aphrodite* 202–246, which focuses on the problem of being immortal but not ageless.

[36] All this is mirrored in Ar. *Av.* 688 ff.

[37] Epic. *Men.* 123, ἄφθαρτος καὶ μακάριος; also in the first of his *Kuriai Doxai*, summarized by Cic. *ND* I 45–6, who in accordance with the argument at stake adds: "and of human shape." On the precarious status of divine immortality in Stoic and Epicurean theology see: A.A. Long, Scepticism about Gods in Hellenistic Philosophy, in: M. Griffiths & D. Mastronarde (edd.), *Cabinet of the Muses: Essays on Classical and Comparative Literature in Honor of Thomas G. Rosenmeyer* (Atlanta 1990) 279–291. On gods in Epicurean theology: R. Koch, *Comment peut-on être dieu? La secte d'Épicure* (Paris 2005). Outside philosophy, Greek literature provides many references to dead gods and their tombs: F. Pfister, *Der Reliquienkult im Altertum* (Giessen 1909) 385–391; Pease comm. *Cicero ND* II–III, p. 1097. On dead Zeuses: M. Kokolakis, Zeus' Tomb. An Object of Pride and Reproach, *Kernos* 8 (1995) 123–138. The traditional predicate or substantive ἀθάνατος for the gods was standard in early and classical Greek, the more competitive expression θεοὶ ἀθάνατοι only appears in inscriptions of the third c. AD: L. Robert, Documents d'Asie Mineure, *BCH* 107 (1983) 583–586. Cf. Chaniotis 2010, 137 n. 112 .

science and of infinite power." Elsewhere he states: "The gods are no more all-powerful or omniscient than they are eternal."[38] With this he voices a near-universal dogma. Scholars of such different denominations as Brelich, Bremmer, Burkert, and Detienne, among many others agree with this general statement.[39] Gould 1985, 7, is exemplarily explicit in his formulation: "There is never an assumption of divine omnipotence (nor of a divine creation of the universe, except in philosophical 'theology'),[40] nor any consistent belief in divine omnipresence." Let us have a look.

First, however, a question: what exactly do these authors mean by 'omnipotence': the unrestricted faculty to achieve anything that comes to the god's mind or the hierarchical supremacy and unbridled dominance wielded by one god over the whole universe, including gods, men and matter? It is perhaps not by chance that we do not get an

---

[38] Vernant 1980, 102, adding at p. 103. "What we find then is neither omniscience nor omnipotence but specific forms of knowledge and power between which certain oppositions may arrive."

[39] A. Brelich, Der Polytheismus, *Numen* 7 (1960) 123–136, esp. 127, makes it his first characteristic of a polytheistic pantheon "die Allmacht, zum Beispiel, ist mit der göttlichen Vielzahl unvereinbar; denn mehrere Götter können nicht allmächtig sein (…)." Burkert 1985, 248: "its [polytheism's] multiplicity always implies opposition: Hera against Zeus, Aphrodite against Artemis (…). Consequently order is possible only as apportionment, *moira*, as departmentalization. Every god protects his domain; he intervenes if, and only if, this domain is specifically violated. This is true at first even of Zeus." Detienne 1986, 51: "Il n'est pas de polythéisme qui n'implique une limitation de pouvoirs en même temps que de compétences. Le pouvoir de chacun reçoit sa frontière et sa délimitation des autres, et tout savoir n'existe que d'affronter les compétences des autres." Bruit-Schmitt 1992, 3–4: "the gods … did not create the cosmos or mankind, but were themselves created (…) they were not omnipotent and omniscient, but possessed only limited powers and areas of knowledge; they were themselves subject to fate, and they intervened constantly in the affairs of men." Bremmer 1994, 11: "Greek gods resembled and differed from the Christian God in important aspects. Like Him, they were invisible, but they were not loving, almighty, or omnipresent; moreover, they were 'envious and disorderly': Hdt. I.32.1" (the Hdt. text, however, has *to theion*, and the two negative qualities belong to 'the gods' as a comprehensive notion as discussed in our Ch. II. Besides, the notion of enviousness is not a particularly appropriate differentiator between the Jewish-Christian god and those of the Greeks, who may both be called "envious/jealous," even if the objectives of their envy may differ). On the Homeric gods: Scheer 2001, 35: "Die Götter sind nicht allmächtig. Sie sind nicht allwissend. Sie sind nicht von vornherein gnädig und gut. Sie sind nicht omnipräsent." Cf. *eadem* 2000, 115 ff. Christian theologians writing on Greek polytheism arrive at similar conclusions. Van den Brink 1993, 173: "The gods of Greek mythology were too numerous to be omnipotent (…) the mythological deities are clearly depicted as limiting the range of each other's power."

[40] D. Sedley, *Creationism and Its Critics in Antiquity* (Berkeley 2007).

answer to this question, indeed that none of these authors seems to bother about these trifles of definition. Vernant explicitly embraces both notions in his definition, denying the Greek gods both omnipotence *and* infinite power (as well as omniscience). So does Detienne when he speaks of "pouvoirs en même temps que de compétences." When Bremmer opposes Greek polytheism to the almighty god of Jewish-Christian theology, both connotations seem to be necessarily implied and perhaps this is also the best manner to understand others of these—ominously vague—statements. After all, in scholarly discourse one type of omnipotence can be distinguished from, but cannot easily be conceived without the other. Especially not in a monotheism where God's capacity to do all things (omnipotence) is often understood as a corollary of his being supreme and sole ruler of the universe (almightiness).[41]

All classical scholars writing on the (non-)omnipotence of Greek gods inevitably take the notion omnipotence (and/or almightiness) in the sense it has acquired in the Jewish-Christian tradition. What they rarely if ever realize is that this Christian concept is anything but a well-defined and indisputable axiomatic notion. On the contrary, the question whether the God of Jews and Christians is—*can* be—omnipotent has been the subject of fierce theological debate ever since the early modern period, a debate which has come to an existential culmination after the Holocaust. Apart from the impossibility that gods achieve things that are incompatible with their own nature, physical law or logic, as argued by Greek thinkers (as we shall discuss later in this chapter), there is a range of different arguments against unlimited divine omnipotence, especially in the context of the problem of evil[42] and the theodicy in connection with human free will. "God cannot bring it about that an agent freely does one thing rather than another"

---

[41] These two qualities are generally distinguished in theological works, the first, 'the power to do all things', regarded as a philosophical concept, the second, 'the power over all things', as a biblical theological concept. See e.g. P.T. Geach, Omnipotence, *Philosophy* 43 (1973) 7–20 = *idem, Providence and Evil* (Cambridge 1977) 3–28. However, Van den Brink 1993, Ch. III, has convincingly argued that both can be defined as power to do all things, although he does distinguish between philosophical omnipotence and biblical almightiness. At p. 159 he defines omnipotence as "the ability to do all things (to bring about all things, or to make a maximal difference to the universe)."

[42] For a revealing insight into the aporia of the problem evil versus divine omnipotence see: M.L. Peterson, *God and Evil*: *An Introduction to the Issues* (Boulder Colorado 1998). Cf. above Ch. II p. 236 f.

thus one theologian.[43] Others argue that God's omnipotence, as demonstrated in his creation of kosmos and world, was defined by his task to sustain his creation.[44] Yet another view is that God ties himself down by an act of self-restraint in restricting his own omnipotence.[45] In a scathingly critical and eminently clear book on such arguments and counterarguments, N. Everitt compellingly argues that whoever wishes to explicitly defend that God is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient, in the same breath implicitly but irrefutably argues for his non-existence.[46] Admittedly less translucent, but no less brilliant (and relevant to our own discussion), finally, is the proposition: "What it will make sense to say a divine being can do depends on what it makes sense to say a divine being does."[47]

In sum, if we wish to assess ancient Greek religious ideas about divine competence, our notion 'omnipotence' turns out to be less reliable a tool then one might have imagined. It is my intention to show that things are even more complicated than that and that Greek religion may boast divine omnipotence with the same right as does the alleged monotheism of the biblical Scriptures.[48] I shall focus my attention on claims that the gods can do whatever they wish to, but much of what we will discover has comparable implications for the notion of supreme dominance over the world or kosmos in a henotheistic sense of that word.

---

[43] A. Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford 1974); *idem, God, Freedom and Evil* (Grand Rapids 1977). The early Stoics found themselves confronted with the same problem. See below p. 397.

[44] H. Hommel, Pantokrator, Schöpfer und Erhalter, *Theologia Viatorum* 5 (1953/4) 322–378 = (revised version) *Sebasmata. Studien zur antiken Religionsgeschichte und zum frühen Christentum* (Tübingen 1983) 133–177; Van den Brink 1993, 55; Babut 2009, Ch. II (pp. 67–136), Le Pantocrator et la création *ex nihilo*.

[45] T. Trappe, *Allmacht und Selbstbeschränkung Gottes* (Zürich 1997). In the same vein with respect to ancient Greek divine omnipotence: C. Kemper, *Göttliche Allmacht und menschliche Verantwortung. Sittlicher Wert bei archaischen Dichtern der Griechen* (Trier 1993), espec. 43–45.

[46] N. Everitt, *The Non-existence of God* (London – New York 2004), chapters 13 through 15, to my knowledge the best introduction into this impenetrable jungle of theological brain-teasers. Chapter 12 deals with the "problems about evil," one of the least rewarding divisions of the Christian theological enterprise. On which see also Bachmann 2002, 11–45 and 46–112, respectively and see the literature in n. 163 below.

[47] Ph.E. Devenish, Omnipotence, Creation, Perfection: Kenny and Aquinas on the Power and Action of God, *Modern Theology* 1 (1985) 105–117, espec. 115.

[48] On the precariousness of especially OT monotheism, see Ch. III p. 242.

2. God: Powerful or All-Powerful?

Many a late antique Coptic prayer or ritual spell,[49] following an ancient Egyptian practice, makes an appeal to the omnipotence of gods, listing their unlimited powers in long aretalogical praises, as we have discussed in Ch. III, including such hyperboles as "you are the one who is over them all, father of all; without you nothing can happen, god who gives hope, who grants healing" (no. 66), or, better still, *adunata* specifically characteristic of divine self-proclamations such as: "I can make the iron into water, I can stop the sun in its chariot" (no. 75). In one spell (no. 43) for "a person who is swollen" (meaning a pregnant woman suffering from retarded dilatation) the God Amun claims in a *parallelismus membrorum* belonging to the best aretalogical tradition:

> I make those who are pregnant give birth,
> I close up those who miscarry,

unexpectedly adding in the next line:

> I make all eggs productive…except the infertile eggs.

The reader cannot help feeling a touch of disappointment when confronted with such a *testimonium paupertatis* concerning the unmanageability of infertile eggs in an otherwise lavish orchestration of omnipotence.[50] After all, this is both the literary genre and the very period in which gods, demons and magicians continuously and practically without exception claim a boundless and arbitrary power to do whatever comes to their minds, often expressed in stereotyped pairs of two polar and opposite qualities such as "I soothe the sea and

---

[49] As they are most accessibly collected in Meyer & Smith 1994, to which the numbers of the quotes in my text refer.

[50] Peter Rhodes refers me to a nice Hebrew parallel in Judges 1.19. Judah is on the way to conquering the land of the Canaanites: "And the Lord was with Judah: and he captured the mountains. But he could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron." Naive singularities in praises of omnipotence abound. The Hebrew Morning Prayer says: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast bestowed insight on the cock to tell the day from the night," One also finds them in utopian imagery. There it may be the ultimate test of bliss "not to need to change your socks", as I found out in McClintock's celebrated 1928 song "Big Rock Candy Mountain" (with thanks to Mary Di Lucia).

make it turbulent" or "I make the navigable unnavigable whenever it pleases me."[51]

However, this concerns a text from late antique Egypt,[52] far distant from classical Greece in place and time. Let us therefore make a big leap in time and in social-intellectual level.[53] I quote a few lines from the famous Hymn to Zeus by Kleanthes (3d century BC), in the first 17 lines of which Zeus, being the first cause of Nature and the guiding principle of natural law, is hailed with various formulas of omnipotence culminating in (15–17):

> Nothing occurs on the earth apart from you, o God,
> nor in the heavenly regions nor in the sea
> except what evil men do in their folly.

The structural correspondence with the three lines of the late antique spell from Egypt is remarkable. And the reader's surprise is proportionate. His first impression that the inconsistency is intentional is confirmed in the subsequent four lines (18–21). They introduce an attempt at solving the intrinsic contradiction evoked by a divine providence that is both perfect and defective, a problem inherent in the Stoa, which cannot really tolerate the existence of evil. How can evil exist in a world that is ruled by God, the only single active principle in a monistic system, without making the god responsible for its existence?[54] The solution proposed in the hymn is so intricate that specialists must be called in to explain it to the less gifted.[55] And the inconsistency remains, as it does in Christian theology.

---

[51] Isis aretalogy from Kume, as discussed above p. 284. For more—and stronger—enunciations of this type see below pp. 422–426.

[52] The restriction with regard to the infertile egg may have its origin in Egyptian mythology. In demotic texts on the birth houses, Amun vivifies—but does not create—the young god. Knuhm fashions the god and Amun then brings life to him. This may mean that Amun cannot really create life in anything that does not have the potential to become alive (with thanks to John Baines).

[53] Though, admittedly, the author of this testimony, Kleanthes, had a reputation for being slow of wit. According to Diogenes Laertius 7.168, Kleanthes "had industry but no natural aptitude for physics, and he was extraordinarily slow."

[54] A.A. Long, The Stoic Concept of Evil, *PhQ* 18 (1968) 329–343, espec. 330–333.

[55] S. Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy* (Oxford 1998) 347: "It is impossible to tell from our sources whether Cleanthes had any deep understanding of the problem of determinism and freedom. But there are no signs that he was in any way aware of the difficulties. The hymn is certainly full of obscurities and near-inconsistencies (as hymns tend to be)…;" A.A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy* (London 1974) 182: "It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the Stoics' desire to attribute everything

But this is still not really *classic* Greek religion. It is a precarious marriage between philosophy and religion, which, particularly in its Stoic variant, is practically doomed to end up in conflict and divorce. So, then, let us finally go back another few centuries. If a monkey "does not know what she knows,"[56] Apollo, contrarily, claims to know what he does not know and to do what he cannot do, when he says "I know the number of the sand and the measure of the sea, I understand the speech of the dumb and hear the voiceless" (Hdt. 1.47). It is perhaps the most pretentious expression of omnipotence in classical Greek literature. Yet according to the same Herodotus the same Apollo admits that "destiny is inescapable even for a god," a restriction on divine omnipotence which precluded him from delaying Croesus' downfall for more than a few years.[57] Seven or eight centuries later, the same (or was it another? Cf. Ch. I, p. 75.) Apollo has throttled down even with respect to his own speciality: omniscience. In several oracles of the third century AD we hear Apollo Kareios warning that even the gods, including the oracle god that he is himself, do not claim to know everything.[58]

---

to a single principle has produced a fundamental incoherence on this point." Just before, he had already bucked us up by labelling it an "apparent contradiction" (181). Long's summary (182) does not help either: "The harmony of the universe as a whole is something which transcends any attempt to view the world from a particular part. If we view Nature's activities as contradictory this is due to the limitations of human vision. Moreover, Nature does not will the actions of bad men. The harmonizing of dissonance, not the creation of dissonance, is Nature's work." There is a courageous suggestion to solve the problems in: J.C. Thom, The Problem of Evil in Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus, ActCl.* 41 (1998) 45–57. See also *idem, Cleanthes' Hymn to Zeus. Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Tübingen 2005) 94–98. But I agree with Rüpke 2001, 68, on the Kleanthes Hymn as exemplary for the Stoic system: "das System lebt auch von seinen Inkonsistenzen" ("The system derives energy from its inconsistencies" in the—somewhat questionable—translation of the English edition).

[56] Above p. 380.

[57] In which he was surpassed by Asklepios who granted his protégé Aelios Aristides "ten years from himself and an additional three years from Serapis" (Ael. Arist. *Hieroi Logoi* II. 18). This is quite a remarkable claim since "ten years was felt to be the limit of resisting or trifling fate": S. Levin, Diotima's Visit and Service to Athens, *GB* 3 (1975) 223–240, espec. 234–239, on this fixed term.

[58] "Whichever god thinks he is cleverer than the other gods or tries to enrich himself (?) on the strength of false claims, stable wealth will not accompany him (?)," on which see: M. West, Oracles of Apollo Kareios: A Revised Text, *ZPE* 1 (1967) 183–187, espec. 187, with earlier literature. The confession that a god, even if his name is Apollo, does not know everything may be in line with some others of these curious theological or theosophical oracles, in which Apollo admits that he is only a messenger of the nameless real God, but they do contrast with the generally very confident tone of the majority of divine self-proclamations of this period. R. Merkelbach & J. Stauber,

The whole ambiguity is exemplarily and wittily exposed in the second fable of Babrius. A farmer has lost his mattock and suspecting the nearby rustics of the theft brings them into the city for the purpose of putting them under oath before the gods. "For people suppose that the simpletons among the gods live in the country, while those who dwell within the city walls are unerring and observe everything that goes on" (εἶναι τ' ἀληθεῖς καὶ τὰ πᾶντ' ἐποπτεύειν).[59] However, even before they can enter the temple a herald comes forth and promises a huge reward for the one who can give information about property stolen from the temple. So the farmer decides to return, empty-handed: "How can this god know about other thieves, when he does not even know who has stolen his own property?" The little fable presents two revealing details, which will prove important to our further discussion: first, not every god is equally good in knowing and seeing. You have to seek out the experts. Secondly, even those who are generally deemed to be the best—indeed "capable of seeing everything"—may prove deficient.[60]

Die Orakel des Apollon von Klaros, *EA* 27 (1996) 1–53 = R. Merkelbach, *Philologica. Ausgewählte kleine Schriften* (Stuttgart – Leipzig 1997) 155–218; Busine 2005, *passim*, espec. 427. Chaniotis 2010, 117: "For many worshippers of traditional religion it must have been as shocking to learn from Apollo that the traditional gods were only messengers and a small part of a motherless polyonymous god as it was for Julian two centuries later to learn, again from Apollo, that his oracle was no more."

[59] Dover 1974, 257–261 gives the evidence. All-knowing, however, does not necessarily imply all-helpful. On the scarcity of evidence of all-knowing gods in classical Greece see: R. Garland, Religious Authority in Archaic and Classical Athens, *BSA* 79 (1984) 75–123. We do find a few warnings for members of a jury to vote the correct way in order to avoid the wrath of the gods and a few isolated expressions claiming that the gods "oversee all human acts" (Lyc. *c. Leoc*. 94). Cf. *ibid*. 146, where the orator reminds the jury that "each of you, in casting his vote now in secret, will make his own thought apparent to the gods" or "though far off in heaven, they see all that men do" (Eur. *Bac.* 393 ff.). The interesting fact, however, is not so much that they occur, but that their occurrence is so rare. See for a discussion and further literature: Versnel 2002, 41–45. In other words: gods may be able to see everything, but do so only when their own interest is involved. This is true in particular in the context of oath taking, on which see: Dover *l.c*.

[60] At any rate, in order to make double sure, a woman in a recently published papyrus, having been robbed of three mattocks, first brings her suspect to the altar to make him swear that he is innocent ("Are the mattocks yours as you maintain? … "the mattocks are mine") and next gives the case into the hands of King Ptolemy with the formulaic request μὴ περιιδεῖν με ἀδικουμένην and ἵνα ἔπι σε καταφυγοῦσα τύχω τοῦ δικαίου. See: G. Schwendner & P. Sijpesteijn, An Enteuxis from the Zenon Archive from a Female Plaintiff, *Ancient Society* 25 (1994) 141–149. One wonders what the ancient readers may have thought when confronted with the numerous *leges sacrae* mentioning penalties for temple robbery (*hierosylia*): Auffarth 1994b, 175–177.

These testimonia give rise to the suspicion that any monolithic or general statement concerning omnipotence or lack of omnipotence (including omniscience) in Greek religion is bound to be overturned by the next piece of evidence. So far we have seen only few and scattered pieces of information, which we have no right to extrapolate into a general inference. However, we are lucky enough to have a comprehensive collection of records which provides a more systematic and consistent picture of the ambiguity at stake.

3. Miracles in Double Perspective: The Case of Asklepios

Greek gods can work miracles. However, the term 'miracle' refers to a polythetic class covering a great variety of phenomena of a widely divergent nature. A considerable number of the famous inscriptions recording miraculous cures (*iamata*) in the sanctuary of Asklepios[61] at Epidauros as well as votive reliefs representing the healing event depict the god in the role of a physician curing patients by means of surgery, medical prescriptions and drugs in many respects similar to

[61] *IG* IV 1^2, 121–124; *Syll.*^{3} 1168 f.; *SGDI* 3339 f. Herzog 1931, henceforth cited as Herzog; Edelstein and Edelstein I–II (henceforth cited as Edelstein), who omit the stelai C and D; LiDonnici 1995. See for further (epigraphical) literature: Chaniotis 1988, 19–23. The *iamata* are henceforth cited after the numeration of Herzog 1–70, if necessary also by that of LiDonnici who follows the order of the four *stelai* A, 1 etc. B, 1 etc. C, D. Comparable lists of miracle cures have been found at Lebena (*I.Cret.* I.xvii 8, 17–19, cf. below n. 128), and are reported for Kos and Trikka (Strabo 8.6.15; 14.2.19). From other Asklepieia, for instance at Corinth, no *iamata* have survived, but patients left other testimonies: votive offerings in the form of parts of the body: Lang 1977. Generally on anatomical votives see Ch. I pp. 124 f. Dillon 1994 gives a full survey of all ritual preparations for incubation in the various Asklepieia. On the incubational aspects of the Asklepios cult see: G.H. Renberg, *Where Dreams May Come: A Survey of Incubation Sanctuaries in the Greco-Roman World* (forthcoming 2011), Part II: Greek Cults, Ch. 3: Therapeutic Incubation in the Greek World: Asklepios. In Christian pilgrim sites cures are also listed, not only in ex voto's left by the customers, but also in official records. Many sites, such as for instance the convent of Hagia Eirini at Athens, issue their own journals and tapes with miracles, phrased and composed in a manner closely resembling the ones of Asklepios. M. Bax, *Religieuze regimes in ontwikkeling. Verhulde vormen van macht en afhankelijkheid* (Hilversum 1988) 106, describes the registering in Medjugorje of 200 to 500 cures per day (as noticed by Naerebout 1997, 365 n. 853). On possible influences of epigraphically recorded miracle cures on comparable New Testament miracle reports see: M. Wolter, Inschriftliche Heilungsberichte und Neutestamentliche Wundererzählungen. Überlieferungs- und Formgeschichtliche Beobachtungen, in: Kl. Berger, F. Vouga, M. Wolter & D. Zeller, *Studien und Texte zur Formgeschichte* (TANZ Tübingen 1992) 135–175.

those of human physicians.[62] Viewed against the specific background of the cures, the analogy finds a natural explanation: Asklepieia generally stand out as joint ventures of sanctuary and medical clinic. Both divine miracle and human medical treatment might prevail, simultaneously or alternatively, thus naturally tending to mutually influence each other.[63]

> Clearly the faithful (….) expected the god to behave in visions in ways which were in certain respects very similar to those of the doctors represented in our extant Hippocratic treatises….

---

[62] For instance nos. 19, 41 (drugs); 13, 21, 23, 25, 27 (surgery). Also in miracle accounts from other Asklepieia: Lebena (*ICret* I, nos. 8–16; Edelstein nos. 439–442, cf. below n. 128), which were grouped entirely by medical content, e.g. surgery, medicine etc.; Chr. Habicht, *Die Inschriften des Asklepieions* (Berlin 1969) no. 139. Herzog gives a full survey of medical parallels for Epidaurian miracles. Recently, B.L. Wickkiser, Chronicles of Chronic Cases and Tools of the Trade at Asklepieia," *ARG* 8 (2006) 25–40, summarized in B. Wickkiser 2008, 58–61, has shown that Asklepios' medical attention was generally sought by those suffering from chronic, though non-terminal, ailments, who despaired of being cured by physicians and decided to turn instead to that profession's divine patron.

[63] Admittedly, there are important differences as well. The Coan medical school of the Asclepiads (M. Gamberale, Ricerche sul γένος degli Asclepiadi, *RAL* 33 [1978] 83–95) boasted a direct descent from the divine physician and, consequently, there is a strong emphasis on human medical treatment. There is also evidence for medical and divine cooperation in the Asklepieia of Athens and Troizen. In contradistinction, Epidauros betrays a certain—sometimes undisguised—reservation concerning human physicians and accordingly has no real scientific medical tradition. However, the Epidaurian sanctuary boasted ample accommodations for the patients, long term cures and protracted treatment, all sustained by a sizeable staff. See: Herzog 1931, 139–160, concluding (157): "so finden sich in allen Asklepieien gemeinsame Züge, die nur in den einen stärker, in den anderen schwächer entwickelt sind (….), die auch wenn sie nicht von zünftigen Ärtzten überwacht werden, doch von der medizinischen Wissenschaft der Zeit abhängig sind, auch wenn deren Verächtung zur Schau getragen wird." Cf. Cox Miller 1994, 113 on Epidauros: "the equivalent of an out-patient clinic," and especially H. King, *Hippocrates' Woman. Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece* (London – New York 1998) Ch. V 'Asklepios and Women's Healing' (99–113) on the question: "But how far apart were Hippocrates and Asklepios?" with the well-argued answer: "they were not perceived as incompatible alternatives." On Etruscan and Italic healing centres: J. MacIntosh Turfa, Was there Room for Healing in the Healing Sanctuaries? *ARG* 8 (2006) 63–80. J. Jouanna, Hippocrate de Cos et le sacré, *JS* (1989) 3–22 (= *Koinonia* 12 [1988] 91–113), argues that a famous expression in the *Regimen* καὶ τὸ μὲν εὔχεσθαι ἀγαθόν, δεῖ δὲ καὶ αὐτὸν συλλαμβάνοντα τοὺς θεοὺς ἐπικάλεῖσθαι, refers to a co-operation between god and physician. Note, however, that expressions such as σὺν Ἀθηνᾷ καὶ χεῖρα κίνει are proverbial (above Ch. II n. 30). Nonetheless, at Epidauros the 'one and only' physician is emphatically the god.

thus Geoffrey Lloyd,[64] one among many, ancient[65] and modern,[66] to have noticed this remarkable analogy. "Der Gott hat offenbar Medizin studiert:" thus the summary by a German scholar.[67]

Of course, the god's craft is superior to human medicine and equally naturally is often praised as infallible. The Epidaurian *iamata* in particular testify to this belief. Yet, there is another side. In one of his *Epistulae* 20 (L IX, 386) Hippokrates writes that despite his advanced age he has not reached perfection in his art. "For even the inventor of the medical art, Asklepios, did not achieve that, but failed in many cases as we can read in the scholarly literature (lit. 'books of the prose writers': αἱ τῶν ξυγγραφέων βίβλοι)."[68] And many are the echoes in later medical authors all varying on the theme "that not even a god can achieve anything he wants" (*ne deum quidem posse omnia*: Pliny *HN* 2.27).[69]

Now, what does this mean? First and foremost we may conclude that Asklepios, another "most philanthropic god,"[70] represents an ideal case—and indeed the most extreme and consistent one—of the anthropomorphisation of a god in action, so extreme indeed that in his case even the spatial separation between men and gods is sometimes completely blurred. Asklepios is often seen walking and practising his healing art among mortals, not as a mirage (οὐ φάσμα), but

---

[64] Lloyd 1979, 40 f.; *ibid.* 6: "The development of 'temple medicine' may well owe a good deal to—certainly it often imitates—rationalistic medicine."

[65] Hippoc. *Ep.* 15.

[66] Herzog 22; 71 ff. and above n. 63. Edelstein II, 101 f.; 112 n. 4: "it is interesting to observe again and again how closely the concept of the god resembles that of the medical practitioner"; *ibid.* 154: "The god's cures were medical cures;" Behr 1968, 162–170; Kee 1982, 134–136; O. Temkin, *Hippocrates in a World of Pagans and Christians* (Baltimore 1991) 79–85.

[67] J. Ilberg, *Rufus von Ephesos. Ein griechischer Artzt in trajanischer Zeit* (Abh. Sachsischer Ak. 41.1 1930, Leipzig 1931) 32, adding: "man sieht den Einfluss der Wissenschaft auf die Tempelpraxis um 100 nach Chr." Cf. L. Perilli, 'Il dio a evidentemente studiato medicina'. Libri di medicina nelle bibliotheche antiche: il caso dei santuari di Asclepio, in: N. Alessandro (ed.), *Stranieri e non cittadini nei santuari greci* (Firenze 2006) 472–510.

[68] On the recommended Hippocratic attitude vis-à-vis incurable illness, see: R.M. Rosen & M. Horstmanshoff, The Andreia of the Hippocratic Physician and the Problem of Incurables, in: R.M. Rosen & I. Sluiter (edd.), *Andreia. Studies in Manliness and Courage in Classical Antiquity* (Leiden 2003) 95–114.

[69] Cf. Galen. *De sanitate tuenda* I.12.15 (K); Aretaeus 7.5.10: "not all illnesses can be healed. For then the doctor would be greater than (a) god;" Max. Tyr. *Philosophoumena* 40.3 d–e (K 475).

[70] Aelian. *NA* 9.33 (Edelstein no. 422): θεῶν φιλανθρωπότατε Ἀσκληπιέ.

clearly visible to men's eyes (ἐπίδηλος τοῖς ἀνθρώποις).[71] How very 'humanlike' the god operates in this perspective is shown in one of the *iamata* (no. 23): Aristagora slept in the Asklepieion of Troizen, the nearest rival sanctuary.[72] As Asklepios was engaged in Epidaurus (not surprisingly, since we are reading an Epidaurian advertisement),[73] his sons had to perform the operation, which unfortunately required the separation of the head from the body. The sons managed to do the trick but were less successful in re-attaching the head to the body. So Asklepios was sent for, but could not come until the following night and in the intervening day the priest saw Aristagora lying in the *enkoimeterion* with her head detached from her body.[74]

The somewhat naive[75] emphasis on the restrictions in the freedom of action and spatial scope of the god and the necessity of travelling if his specific expertise is required elsewhere[76] is obviously inspired by

---

[71] The two expressions in Celsus *apud* Origines III.24 and Philostr. *VA*. 1.7, respectively. On these aspects see Weinreich 1909, 1 ff. The expression "not in a dream and not in a vision but clear and alive (or real)" is near formulaic. Cf. e.g.: Maxim. Tyr. *Philosoph*. 9.7 Ἀσκλήπιος ἰᾶται νῦν (.....) εἶδον καὶ τὸν Ἀσκλήπιον, ἀλλ' οὐχὶ ὄναρ. See: Pfister 1924, 281 f.

[72] On the Asklepieion of Troizen: C. Habicht, *Pausanias' Guide to Ancient Greece* (Berkeley 1985) 31 f.

[73] Treatment at Troizen should be generally advised against: in no. 48, too, the doctors of Troizen are belittled by the Epidaurian god.

[74] Interestingly, there is a variant in Aelian. *NA* 9.33 (Edelstein no. 422), where the whole story is situated in Epidauros, but the god was absent, and it was his attendants who performed the decapitation. Decapitation seems to have been a cherished manner to remove worms and other funny bits from a body: cf. no. 21. Attaching severed heads was the *nec plus ultra* in miracle mongery, not only in Greece. In a cycle of Egyptian miracle stories from the late second intermediate period, around 1640–1532 BC (A.M. Blackman, *The Story of King Kheops and the Magicians. Transcribed from Papyrus Westcar, Berlin Papyrus 3033* [Reading 1988]), one of the story tellers pictures a 110-year-old magician who is able to do the most incredible tricks culminating in "he knows how to rejoin a severed head."

[75] The whole story would not cut a poor figure in Aristophanic comedy, as in fact we have a fairly detailed description of the ritual concerning the Asklepieion at Peiraeus in Ar. *Plut.* 660–711. On which: F. Sartori, Aristofane e il culto attico di Asclepio, *Atti e Memorie Accad. Patavina Sc. Lett Arti* 85 (1972–3) 363–378; P. Sineux, Une nuit à l'Asklépieion dans le *Ploutos* d'Aristophane: un récit dans le théatre pour l'étude du rite d'incubation, *Mètis* 4 (2006) 193–210. Cf. below n. 89.

[76] Another case in point can be found in the narrative part added to the paean of Isyllos (late 4th c. BC, Furley & Bremer 2001, no. 6.4. F, l.72 ff.), where the sick son of Isyllos, having arrived at Epidauros calls in the aid of Asklepios. However, since the god is on his way to Sparta he promises: "I will come in due course of time." For the political position and motives of the author of the stele see: Kolde 2003 (also *eadem*, Les épiclèses d'Asclépios dans l'inscription d'Isyllos d'Épidaure: implications politiques, in: Belayche e.a. 2005, 543–555) to be read with the review of P. Sineux,

the human perspective in which his medical activity is being viewed. Doctors are *always* engaged elsewhere when your head needs readjustment. Accordingly, Artemidorus 2.34 ranges him with Hekate, Pan, and Ephialtes among the *epigeioi* (terrestrial) and *aisthetoi* gods (who can be perceived with the senses as opposed to those perceivable through intellect only: *noetoi*). So again: Asklepios displays very human traits, including human limitations.[77]

However, the same passage of Artemidorus discloses an ambiguity, for there it is added: "Asklepios who is *also* said to be intelligible (*noetos*) at the same time." This means that the god is the great exception in Artemidorus' system in simultaneously belonging to two distinctly opposite classes: those gods whom you can perceive with the senses (i.e. as clear, 'real' shapes) and those who can be only perceived by the intelligence (meaning: not visible in real life but only in dreams, visions, or as *phasmata*).[78] Splendid illustrations of this double identity can be found in our primary sources, viz the *iamata* inscriptions and the votive reliefs of Asklepios (from Epidauros, Athens and elsewhere) as well as in those of the closely related healing hero Amphiaraos,[79]

Kernos 18 (2005), 538–542, and the criticism by St. Schröder, Zur Stele des Isyllos in Epidauros, *ZPE* 155 (2006) 55–69.

[77] The fact that he began his life as a hero, not as a god, may have contributed to this. Wilamowitz 1955, II 220: "ein neuer Gott, der nie zu den Olympiern in den Himmel gekommen ist, aber auf Erden mit den Menschen persönlich in Verbindung tritt, was die Olympier längst verlernt hatten;" Edelstein II 155: "Asclepius was a demi-god; it was in accord with his nature to live on earth, to be in constant touch with men." But that is certainly not the end of it. See below p. 420 f.

[78] A.D. Nock 1972, II 589: "Artemidorus, though late, is a good witness for popular beliefs at a fairly unsophisticated level." "Perceivable by intelligence" has in Artemidorus the same meaning as "invisible" in Albinus. Cf. Albinus *Epitome* 15.1. For the distinction between gods perceivable by senses and by intelligence, characteristic of middle Platonism see: A.J. Festugière, *Artémidore. Le clef des songes* (Paris 1975) *ad loc*. and numerous references in Pease *ad* Cic. *ND* I.49 on the words *ut primum non sensu sed mente cernatur*.

[79] Van Straten 1976, 3–5, provides the evidence from visual art. Nor were they the only healers in ancient Greece. M.E. Gorrini, Eroi salutari della Grecia continentale tra istanze politiche ed universali, *Annali di Archeologia e Storia Antica* NS 9/10 (2002/03) 163–196, presents a panorama of the cult of healing heroes in Greece, based on data from 187 cult sites: 119 of them for Asklepios, whom she includes in the category of healing heroes, the others for heroes such as Machaon, Podaleirios, Amphiaraos, Trophonios, Chiron, Korythos, Hyperteleatas, and Maleatas. For a survey of the locations of Asklepieia see: A. Semeria, Per un censimento degli Asklepieia della Grecia continentale e delle isole, *ASNP* 16 (1986) 931–958; Riethmüller I, 2005, 85–90E. Cf. Simon, Heilende Heroen, *ARG* 6 (2004) 39–43; E. Vikela, Healer Gods and Healing Sanctuaries in Attica: Similarities and Differences, *ARG* 8 (2006) 41–62. On Amphiaraos see: Sineux 2007, espec. Chs. 4–6, emphasizing the close similarity of the two gods in both

especially in the popular image which shows the god in the shape of a snake. An interesting case can be found in one of the *iamata* (no. 17) where it is recorded that *in reality* a snake (generally conceived of as an impersonation of the god)[80] was seen approaching a patient and healing his ulcerated toe, while the patient himself in his dreams had seen a very handsome youth[81]—the god in living form—applying a drug on his toe. The very same double perspective is beautifully illuminated by a votive relief from the Amphiareion at Oropos set up by a certain Archinos.[82] On the left is a picture of the vision as seen by Archinos in his dream: the heros Amphiaraos is giving medical treatment to the right shoulder of Archinos, who is standing before him. To the right of this scene, and more in the background, the same Archinos is lying asleep on a couch, while a snake is licking his right shoulder. A pillar with a pinax symbolizes the sacred environment.[83] To the extreme right, a standing person raising his hand in adoration is probably Archinos again rendering thanks for his recovery. A double,

---

iconography and function. On similarities and differences in representation between Asklepios and Amphiaraos: Klöckner forthcoming 2011, Ch. 3.

[80] As for instance in no. 33 where the snake (= Asklepios) is transported to another city, whereupon a sanctuary for Asklepios is built. There are several of these stories, the best-known the introduction of the Asklepios-cult to Rome, on which most recently: A. Blommart. *Le passage des dieux de l'autre vers la Rome et l'Athènes classiques* (Thèse Paris 1997). The *translatio* of Asklepios to Athens is of a different nature. For detailed discussions see: Garland 1992, 116–135; K. Clinton, The Epidauria and the Arrival of Asclepius in Athens, in: Hägg 1994, 17–34; Parker 1996, 175–187. Garland 1992, 133 speculates on "the possible existence of an extensive network of sanctuaries dedicated to the god and his entourage throughout Attica," not referring to the evidence for Asklepios' sanctuaries in Acharnai, Prospaltai, Sounion and Pentele, as noticed by A. Chaniotis in EBGR 1992, no. 79. Recently Wickkiser 2008, argued that the Athenians invited the god to their city both for the healing expertise that he offered where the traditional (Hippocratic?) methods proved unable to cope with the epidemic, and due to his status as the signature god of Epidauros, a city critical to Athenian influence in the Peloponnese during the Peloponnesian War. Cf. *eadem*, A Chariot for Asklepios: *SEG* 25.226, *ZPE* 168 (2009) 199 ff. Another type of 'political' interpretation of Asklepieia and the publication of their miracles in: P. Sineux, Le sanctuaire d'Asklépios à Lébéna: l'ombre de Gortyne, *Revue Historique* 208 (2006) 589–608.

[81] The identity of the 'fair boy' is not unequivocal. Cf. also no. 14. In no. 31 the fair boy and the god are clearly distinguished; in no. 25 the beautiful youth seems to be the same as Asklepios. In that *iama* the youth impersonating the god operates in real life.

[82] As Herzog already noticed. See: Van Straten 1976, 4 with figure 10. Cf. H. Siefert, Inkubation, Imagination und Kommunikation im antiken Asklepioskult, in: H. Leuner, *Katathymes Bilderleben* (Vienna 1980) 324–345, espec. 330 ff.; A. Krug, *Heilkunst und Heilkult. Medizin in der Antike* (Munich 1984) 154 f.; Sineux 2007, Ch. 6; Klöckner forthcoming 2011.

[83] On this iconographical type of "Bild-im-Bild" see: Klöckner forthcoming 2011, Ch. 5.

or even triple perspective: *onar* (in the dream) and *hupar* (as seen by onlookers in a waking situation), followed by 'post-*hupar*'—meaning a normal cultic event,[84] all in one picture in a cartoonlike sequence.[85]

Nor is this all. There is another interesting ambiguity in Asklepios' nature. The same Epidaurian Asklepios who is most emphatically defined by, as well as bound to his profession, and who, accordingly, displays markedly human characteristics including human frailties, is also the god in whose Epidaurian cult we perceive the earliest traces of a *cultic* 'omnipotence', of a nature that closely resembles—if not anticipates—the Hellenistic and later henotheistic images that we discussed in our third chapter. One of its expressions, and not the least, is the application of miracles as a token of unrestricted power, as it reached its climax much later in Christian miracle accounts: "Their miraculous power reveals their god as a real god" (ἡ δὲ τούτων δύναμις τὸν τούτων Θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἀποφαίνει Θεόν).[86] I shall illustrate the different aspects of this religiosity with a few characteristic *iamata*. First let us compare two miracle stories that are closely related, yet fundamentally different in one respect.

> No. 4 A woman blind of one eye laughed at some of the cures as incredible and impossible (ἀπίθανα καὶ ἀδύνατα), that the lame and the blind should be healed by merely seeing a dream. The god heals her by *cutting the diseased eyeball and pouring in some drugs*, on condition that she would dedicate a silver pig as a memorial to her stupidity (τᾶς ἀμαθίας).
>
> No. 9 A blind man, coming as a suppliant, was derided by some for his silliness (εὐηθίαν) to think that he could recover his sight when one of his eyes had not even a trace of the ball, but only the socket. In his dream the god applies *surgery and a drug* and cures him.

While both cures are unmistakably medical and technical with respect to their clinical procedure, the first cure may be labelled 'super*human*'

---

[84] This is not just a piece of word-play: ὕπαρ is exclusively used as a foil of ὄναρ, to which it owes both its form and its relevance. Ὕπαρ just cannot *exist* without its counterpart. Together they cover the scale of forms that epiphanies and miracles may adopt. Cf. Chariton, 5.5.6 where a servant says to Kallirhoe, who had a dream: "your *onar* is really a *hupar*" (ὥσπερ γὰρ ὄναρ ἔδοξας οὕτως καὶ ὕπαρ). The prayer of gratitude in the relief takes god and man back to their 'normal' relationship and communication and their 'normal' forms of interaction.

[85] This is not the only remarkable votive relief from the Amphiareion. *BCH* 124 (2000) 782, presents a new 'scène d'enkoimèsis' (4th c. BC) which displays two persons (male and female?) lying asleep—as far as I know, unique in this therapeutic setting.

[86] Theodoretos Cyrensis, *Hellenikôn Therapeutike Pathematôn* VII, 65.

in that it evokes a miraculous but not absolutely inconceivable treatment. The second, on the other hand, provides elements that are beyond comprehension and thus merit the label 'super*natural*' rather than 'superhuman': no eye in the socket, yet recovery.[87] No human doctor could ever match this *creatio ex nihilo*. It thus switches our focus from the technical-medical aspect, characteristic of the majority of the *iamata* (and which is not completely lacking here), to a different category. For, indeed, there *is* another perspective. A considerable number of *iamata*, including those generally ranged among the earliest and most remarkable of the collection, describe the cures in terms of what *we* would call genuine or 'supernatural' miracles,[88] for instance lacking *physical* intervention in the form of specific medical applications on the part of the god.[89] Some of the miracle stories are not about

[87] As in other *iamata* Herzog at all costs tries to save the 'normality' of the medical event with his suggestion "Die Augenlider können so hoch geschwollen sein, dass das Auge darunter nicht mehr sichtbar ist (scheinbarer Hohlraum)." However, this is in conflict with the literal wording of the text. More important, possible medical, psychological or neurological explanations of miracle cures are one thing, the way they were recorded in the inscriptions is another. If a text says that there was no eye in the socket, from a religio-historical point of view the correct approach is not to conjure the eye back by explaining the story as erratic, but to value the testimony as it stands: a confession of belief in a supernatural (= humanly impossible) miracle. Cf. Kee 1983, 85 on Herzog: "his commentary and introduction manifest a regrettable, almost pathetic, effort to find features of the cult that can be deemed credible or comprehensible from the perspective of modern medical science." Cf. also LiDonnici 1995, 20 n. 2, and, independently, Dillon 1994, 243: "flawed assumption that all of the *iamata* record cures that actually took place" while he suggests a didactic function instead. Here, however, Dillon is less original than he thinks, though at least more subtle than Wilamowitz 1955, II 227, who speaks of "den Schwindel mit den *iamata*." H.J. Stam & N.P. Spanos, The Asclepian Dream Healings and Hypnosis: A Critique, *The International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis* 30 (1982) 9–22, already strongly challenged the no-nonsense medical interpretations of modern scholars ("prone to anachronistic misinterpretation", providing a full bibliography), and argue that the cures may be better understood by considering them in their cultural context (although not making very clear what exactly *that* is supposed to mean). For a more cautious discussion of pathological and clinical evidence in the *iamata* see: Cl. Prêtre & Ph. Charlier, *Maladies humaines, thérapies divines: analyse épigraphique et paléopathologique de textes de guérison grecs* (Villeneuve 2009).

[88] Herzog p. 60 reminds us that for the Roman Catholic church only those cures are counted as divine miracles that cannot be explained in the frame of rules of natural law.

[89] In Ar. *Plut.* 696–736, Asklepios is mockingly depicted in both roles. First with respect to Neokleides as a genuine physician (716–725), then confronting Ploutos as miracle worker assisted by his snakes (726–737). Cures by simply touching a patient with the hand are a special category (nos. 31, B 11). Cf. 62 = C19: An epileptic is healed by the god pressing his ring [τῷ δακτυλίῳ]—not "with his fingers" as LiDonnici translates—upon him. Asklepios is ἠπιόχειρ in an inscription: *SEG* 50, 1086. On

cures at all but record different types of miraculous intervention. It is the category which Herzog 1931, 51, qualifies as: "den Naturgesetzen und der Vernunft widersprechend (ἀδύνατον)" as opposed to the category that is "nur unerwartet (παράδοξον) oder gar normale Heilung." LiDonnici 1992, 27 calls these miracles "radical and miraculous, suggesting a religious exploration of the nature of the possible, rather than a view of the god as a specifically medically-oriented figure." I give here a few summaries of the most telling cases:

> No. 1 A five years' pregnancy coming to an end by a prompt delivery after a healing sleep.[90] As soon as it was born the new born child washed itself at the fountain and walked about with his mother. The story—appropriately enough—ends with the eulogy: "Admirable is not the size of the tablet (on which the miracle was published), but the divine (power) (τὸ θεῖον)."

Of a different nature are the following two punitive miracles:

> No. 11 Aeschines, when the suppliants were already asleep, climbed up a tree and tried to peer over into the Abaton. He fell from the tree and his eyes were injured. He came as a suppliant to the god, slept in the temple and was healed.
>
> No. 36 (B16) A man laughed at the cures of Asklepios and said: "If the god says he has healed lame people he is lying; for, [if he had the power to do so, why has he not healed Hephaistos?]."[91] But the god did not conceal that he was inflicting a penalty for the insolence. (ὁ δὲ θεὸς τᾶς ὕβριος ποινὰς λαμβάνω[ν οὐκ ἔλαθε]). For soon after the man fell from his horse and was crippled. Later when he had supplicated the god earnestly (πολλὰ καθικετεύ[σαντα..), the god made him well.

Again different are two miracles not related to human health:

> No. 10 A porter went up to the temple and by a fall broke all the vessels in his bag, including the goblet of his master. When he tried to fit

---

this type see the exhaustive discussion in Weinreich 1909, 1–66; K. Sudhoff, Handanlegung des Heilgottes auf attischen Weihetafeln, *Archiv f. Geschichte der Medizin* 18 (1926) 235–250; K. Gross, *Menschenhand und Gotteshand in Antike und Christentum* (edited by W. Speyer, Stuttgart 1985) 433; 444 ff; 494 ff.

[90] Although five years is unparalleled in our evidence, the wish to make a (felicitous) end to a pregnancy is not without parallels. M.L. Lazzarini, in: P. Radici Colace (ed.), *Atti del II seminario internazionale di studi lessici tecnici Greci e Latini* (Messina-Napoli 1999) 353–363, discusses the terms παυσιτοκεῖα (thanksgiving for stopping pregnancy and birthpains) and τελέουμα (the accomplishment of pregnancy).

[91] Herzog's brilliant but bold conjecture inspired by Aristophanes *Anargyros* (frs. 41–63 Kock = frs. 41–66 Kassel-Austin).

> the pieces together a passer-by said: "Foolish fellow (ἄθλιε), why do you put the goblet together in vain? For this one not even Asklepios of Epidaurus could put to rights again." The man put the pieces back in the bag and went on to the temple and having arrived and on opening his bag, there the goblet was entirely whole. Later the master dedicated the goblet to the god.[92]
>
> 47 (C4) A fish porter promises to dedicate to the god a tithe of the profit but fails to keep his promise. After arriving in Arcadia it appears that alarming things have happened to his fishes.[93] While a large crowd attends the spectacle, the porter confesses his deceit (ὄχλου δὲ πολλοῦ περιστάντος ε[ἰς] τὰν θεωρίαν, (....) δηλοῖ τὰν ἐξαπάταν ἅπασα[ν]). After having earnestly supplicated the god (ἐξικετεύσαντος δ'αὐτοῦ τὸν [θεὸν....) the god performs a miracle and the man dedicates the tithe.

In many of these and similar miracles the emphasis is not so much on the nature of the miracle as a healing event- and *not at all* on its technical or medical aspects—but rather on the opposition between human frailty, in terms of thoughtlessness, lack of attention to the god's words, incredulity, lack of confidence[94] or inappropriate fear[95]

---

[92] On the continuity of this typical fairy tale miracle see: O. Weinreich, Das Mirakel vom zerbrochenen und wieder geheilten Gefäss, *Ausgewählte Schriften* I. 87 f.

[93] In his first edition Herzog made them bite the fish porter and stop only after Asklepios' intervention. In a reconsideration (R. Herzog, Zu den iamata von Epidauros, *Eph. Arch.* [1937] 522–526), the fish turn out to be in a state of decomposition and after the divine intervention many of them are stone-dead. Not really a baffling miracle. W. Peek, Fünf Wundergeschichten aus dem Asklepieion von Epidauros, *Abh. Sächs. Ak. Wis.* 56.2 (Leipzig 1963) and L. Robert *BE* 1964, 36–9, suggest different interpretations. The text is simply too corrupt to allow reasonable (let alone unreasonable) guesswork, as once more becomes apparent from the recent treatment by Dillon 1994, 253 and 260. Let us leave it at 'the miracle of the fishy things'.

[94] Stupidity, thoughtlessness, and lack of gratitude toward the god and their consequences: nos. A 2, 3, 7, 11, B 2, 15, 16. Cf. also Artem. 5.9.

[95] Not only in Epidaurus. Cf. *I.Cret* I. XVII no. 18: ὸ [θε]ὸς ἐκέλευσέν με π[ροσ] καρτερεῖν κ[αὶ ἔδ]ωκεν θεραπείαν. In the *Paean of Isyllos* l.74, the first word of Asklepios appearing in an epiphany is θάρσει. On which see: Kolde 2003, 198–206. This expression "do not fear" *vel sim.* is formulaic in miracle stories (especially epiphanies) both pagan and Christian. See for instance: H. Engelmann, *The Delian Aretalogy of Sarapis* (Leiden 1975) 51; *TWNT* s.v. θαρρέω. In a Thessalian inscription of the 2nd c. BC (M. Lilimbaki-Akamaki, *To archaiologiko ergo sti Makedonia kai Thraki* 5 [1991 (1994)] 83–95; *BE* 1994, 414; *SEG* 44.546), the city of Amphipolis prays to the god Δάρρων, who is according to Hesychius a Macedonian healing god, most probably Asklepios. Perhaps Δάρρων = θάρρων, "the encourager." However, a new honorary inscription of the φρατρία τῶν Δαρρωνιστῶν from Mylasa in Karia (W. Blümel, Neue Inschriften aus Karia II: Mylasa und Umgebung, *EA* 37 [2004] 15 no. 20) may suggest a different meaning of this name. J.-M. Carbon, ΔΑΡΡΩΝ and ΔΑΙΜΩΝ: A New Inscription from Mylasa, *EA* 38 (2005) 1–6, suggests that Darron is rather the name of a Hero.

on the one hand and the absolute, unrestricted power of the god on the other. "Great is the divine (power)" exclaims the woman in no. 1, echoed by a woman in Ar. *Plut*. 748, who praises Asklepios with the words "how immense is your power, o king, master." (Ὅσην ἔχεις τὴν δύναμιν, ὦναξ, δέσποτα), or, much later, in Aristides' *Oratio* 42, for Asklepios, 4 ff., where he claims that "the god possesses all powers" (πάσας ἔχων ὁ θεὸς τὰς δυνάμεις).[96] In later times the acclamation "Great is Asklepios" in reaction to his miraculous cures becomes a fixed ritual expression.[97] In these miracle stories the god is not only able to do healing tricks that are superior to those performed by mortal doctors, but he accomplishes things that are *naturally inconceivable.*

Also in other respects we perceive notable differences as compared to the 'normal' medical examples. Let us first pay attention to a formulaic aspect that, if noticed at all,[98] has been undervalued: the patients in this category of supernatural miracles are often explicitly introduced as "coming as a suppliant" (ἀφίκεσθαι/ἔρχεσθαι ἱκέτας/ἱκέτις).[99] This regards nos. 1, 2, 3 (with emphasis), 4 (the only mixed case: there is surgery, but also punishment), 9 (the transitional case of the missing

[96] The same address is used by Aelius Aristides *Or*. 30, 14 and 28: ὦ δέσποτ' Ἀσκληπιέ, on which see: J.-L. Vix, Les épiclèses d'Asclépios dans les Discours XXX et XXXIII d'Aelius Aristide, in: Belayche e.a. 2005, 557–564.

[97] See also below p.# with nn. 111 ff. The same is attested in the cult of other all-powerful gods in this period such as Isis. Also in the context of healing: Tibullus 1.3.27–8: Nunc, dea succurre mihi, nam posse mederi picta docet templis multa tabellis tuis. See for an ample discussion of Isis as an almighty goddess: Versnel 1990, Ch. 1, and generally on the characteristics of these Hellenistic 'supergods' *ibid*. pp. 189–205, and above pp.#. Similarly the Gods of the Maeonian confession texts (collected with extensive commentaries by Petzl 1994) who are constantly acclaimed as 'great', a greatness that is explained as being attested by their miracles, both punitive and healing ones. Cf. above pp.#. The physician Aretaios from Cappadocia 4.1.1 tells us that the most severe illnesses can be only healed either by luck or by the gods, rather than by human craft (τὰ γὰρ μέζονα πάντα ἰῶνται μοῦνοι θεοί).

[98] LiDonnici 1995, 20, in her linguistic analysis of course does not fail to note it, but does not use it for semantic interpretation: "The motifs used to tell the tale are used here specifically for the purpose of identifying compositional strands within the corpus."

[99] Graf 1992, 191 notes that the patients come as ἱκέται (Pausanias uses the term for Epidauros [2.27.2] and Tithoreia [10.32.12]), but views it as a reference to the total reversal of the supplicant's surroundings referring to J. Gould, Hiketeia, *JHS* 93 (1973) 74–103: A *hiketes* is somebody who is separated from his familiar social surroundings and who, contrary to normal behaviour, humbles himself.

eyeball), 11,[100] 36, 47.[101] There is no reference to supplication in *any* of the 'normal/natural medical' *iamata*. Supplication, for that matter, sometimes specified as prostration or kneeling,[102] is more often referred to in the cult of Asklepios, more so than in that of any other Greek god. While προσκυνῆσαι—as in Edelstein no. 438 = *IG* XIV 966 (2 c. AD) in a context of public demonstration (*paradeigmatismos* cf. *iama* no. 47 cited above p. 409)—is an ambiguous term,[103] we have one testimony that is both unequivocal and illuminative. In the very same period of our *iamata*, the cynic Diogenes gave vent to his indignation about the ungraceful attitude of women kneeling before the gods and he dedicated to Asklepios a bruiser, who was to beat up people that fell on their faces.[104] This is all the more remarkable since we find similar

[100] Additionally mentioning "the suppliants." Paus. 2.27.2 referring to a building where the "suppliants of the god (ἱκέται τοῦ θεοῦ) go to sleep" seems to indicate that also in his time the term is in general use for those who seek healing in Epidauros, but in our *iamata* it occurs only in a very special context. More generally, [Hippokrates] *Morb. Sacr.* 4 = 1.41 (Grensemann) tells us what should have been done with those suffering from epilepsy *if* the cause had been divine: εὔχεσθαι καὶ ἐς τὰ ἱρὰ φέροντας ἱκετεύειν τοὺς θεούς. Likewise Thucydides 2.47.4 on the plague speaks of ὅσα τε πρὸς ἱεροῖς ἱκέτευσαν.

[101] If we take the sole verb ἀφίκεσθαι as a short-hand expression for 'coming as a suppliant', which is arguable (Gould, *o.c.* [above n. 99], 84, n. 51; M. Giordano, *La supplica: Rituale, istituzione sociale e tema epico in Omero* [Naples 1999], 193–210; Pulleyn 1997, 59 n. 8), the following nos. should be included: 5, 10, 22, 25, 26, 28, 37, 45, 46. However, in the *iamata* the verb does also occur in the unmarked meaning of arriving somewhere.

[102] A very explicit text: Ael. Arist. *Or.* 50.435: καὶ ἔδει τὸ γόνυ τὸ δέξιον κλίναντα ἱκετεύειν τε καὶ καλεῖν Λύσιον τὸν θεόν. On kneeling in Greek ritual context see: Van Straten 1974; Aubriot 1992, 407–438; Bettinetti 2001, 161–183; Klöckner forthcoming 2011, 2.2.5.5.2, who notes that on votive reliefs kneeling is practically restricted to women. See for (scarce) instances of prostration in Greek secular supplication: F.S. Naiden, *Ancient Supplication* (Oxford 2006), Appendix 1a, pp. 301–323. *Idem, Hiketai* and *Theoroi* at Epidauros, in: Elsner & Rutherford 2005, 73–95, analyses the differences between the two forms of pilgrimage in Epidauros and at pp. 80–90 discusses the *iamata* mentioning *hiketeia*.

[103] It may express a variety of different adorative gestures, including but not restricted to kneeling.

[104] Diog. Laert. 6.37–8. Cf. Arnob. *Adv. Nat.* 1.49, mentioning "severely ill people who went as suppliants (*supplices*) through all temples, although they prostrated (*prostrati*) themselves before the gods and swept the very thresholds with their lips, although with their prayers they wearied Asklepios himself." Different because of the Egyptian implications of the term *proskunema* (on which see: E. Bernand, Réflexions sur les proscynèmes, in: D. Conso, N. Fick & B. Poulle [edd.], *Mélanges F. Kerlouégan* [Paris 1994] 43–60) is *POxy* 1381, 131 (2 AD): After a dream healing of the author by Asklepios Imouthes the mother "did reverence to the manifestation of the god" (τὴν μὲ[ν] τοῦ θε[ο]ῦ προσεκύνησε[ν] ἐπιφάνειαν). Generally, exuberant forms of prostration were seen as tokens of superstitious behaviour. Plut. *De superst.* 166b ff.

instances of *proskunesis*, "kneeling for the god," in the same period in votive reliefs of a few other (healing) gods, but not least in those of Asklepios.

All this is in gratifying concordance with observations we have made previously (Ch. 3, espec. p. 290 f.) in our discussion of the emergence of henotheistic perceptions in Greek theology. There we observed that human need and the awareness of being totally dependent on a divine saviour invariably entail a complex pattern of behaviour and perception. The human suppliant becomes 'smaller', even literally making himself smaller by prostrating, kneeling, touching the saviour's knees, the supplicatory attitude par excellence which can boast a rich ethological prehistory.[105] All this is substantiated by recent research on language and contexts of supplication.[106] After Aubriot 1992, Ch. V had argued that *hiketeia* involves a total self-abasement of the petitioner, λιτή on the other hand being less grovelling, Pulleyn 1997, 57 qualified ἱκετεύειν as "intensified language of entreaty." The natural (and naturally superior) reaction of a god to *hiketeia* is perfectly worded in the Isis aretalogy of Kume l. 36: "I have ordained by law having mercy on suppliants" (Ἐγὼ ἱκέτας ἐλεᾶν ἐνομοθέτησα). And indeed, Asklepian religion *is* essentially a "religion of emergencies."[107] In the ironic words of Plutarch:[108] "if nobody is ill.… we will neither sacrifice to Asklepios nor to the Apotropaioi" (μηδένος νοσούντος … οὐδ' Ἀσκληπιῷ θύσομεν οὐδ' Ἀποτροπαίοις).

Conversely, the god undergoes a fundamental change as well. Like other gods Asklepios becomes more majestic, more encompassing,

---

derides *deisidaimonia* as characterized by ῥίψεις ἐπὶ πρόσωπον, αἰσχρὰς προκαθίσεις, ἀλλοκότους προσκυνήσεις ("unusual forms of *proskunesis*"), but only few pages later (169d) he lists among the most agreeable things for humans: "religious festivals, feasts belonging to sacrificial ritual, mysteries and prayers to the gods and … προσκυνήσεις!" Once more it turns out that the context is entirely responsible for the meaning or rather for the assessment of the term.

[105] Burkert 1979, 43–45; 1996a, 121. On 'sitting' in temples as a gesture of piety see: Veyne 1989, 175–182. Cf. Auffarth 1994b, 138: "Die Vorstellung, daß die Menschen "Sklaven" ihres Gottes sind, dass der freihe Bürger einer griechischen Polis dem Gott die Proskunese erweisen muss, ist in der spätklassischen Polisreligion präsent" (referring to Van Straten, Pleket, and B. Jordan, *Servants of the Gods. A Study in the Religion, History and Literature of Fifth-Century Athens* [Göttingen 1979], who, however, focus on different aspects). On the ambivalence between nearness and distance in the relationship between gods and men see also: Auffarth 1994a.

[106] Gould 1973; Aubriot 1992; Pulleyn 1997.

[107] A.D. Nock, review of Edelstein & Edelstein, *CPh* 45 (1950) 45–50, espec. 48.

[108] Plut. *Sept.sap.conv.* 16.159 f.

all-powerful.[109] He was called "the great saviour" (μέγας σωτήρ)[110] and the singing of hymns and recitation of prayers in his cult[111] culminated in the ritual response "Great is Asklepios."[112] This can be seen as the Hellenistic condensation of Ar. *Plut*. 748 "How immense is thy power, o lord," which we already saw above,[113] exactly as in the cults of the great Hellenistic gods. Asklepios is also the first god to whom a tragedy bearing his name was dedicated by Aristarchos, a contemporary of Euripides, as a *charisterion* for a cure and at the god's request. While in one of the *iamata* (no. 7) the patient promises that after his recovery he will have an image inscribed and dedicate it to the god, in other stories it is the god himself who after a miracle demands that it all be written down (ἐκέλευσεν δὲ καὶ ἀναγράψαι ταῦτα).[114]

---

[109] The verticalisation in the relationship between smaller mortals and bigger gods in Hellenistic times is amply documented in literature, epigraphy and visual art. See in general: Versnel 1990, 189–204; *idem*, Religious Projection: A Hellenistic Instance, in: L. Martin (ed.), *Religious Transformations and Socio-Political Change* (Berlin – New York 1993) 25–39; and above Ch. III pp. 290 f. For epigraphic evidence see: Pleket 1981, 152–192; for visual art: F.T. van Straten, Images of Gods and Men in a Changing Society: Self-Identity in Hellenistic Religion, in: A. Bulloch, E.S. Gruen, A.A. Long, & A. Stewart (eds.), *Images and Ideologies: Self-Definition in the Hellenistic World* (Berkeley etc. 1993) 248–264.

[110] *IG* II^2 4368 (Athens).

[111] Edelstein II, 184–194, espec. 193 (and see nos. 482, 598, 592 in particular). Cf. Behr 1968, 32–35. On the hymn made by Sophocles: Edelstein nos. 587–607. A collection of hymns connected with the healing cult of Epidauros, in: Furley & Bremer 2001 I, 207–245.

[112] Ael. Arist. *Or*. 48.21.

[113] This is the first brief aretalogy of Asklepios known to us. Not much later is the aretalogy in the literal sense of the word in the Hymn of Isyllos (*IG* IV^2 1.128 = Longo 1969, no. 44; Furley & Bremer 2001, no. 6.4.F; Kolde 2003) ll. 59 ff. The final line runs: ταῦτα τοι, ὦ μέγ' ἄριστε θεῶν, ἀνέθηκεν Ἴσυλλος, τιμῶν σὴν ἀρετήν, one of the very first instances of the term ἀρετή in the sense of miraculous power or achievement, so common in Hellenistic and later inscriptions. See: Versnel 1990, 190 ff.; above Ch. III p. 283.

[114] Epidauros: *IG* IV 1^2 126; Lebena, *ICret*. I, no. 19: [ἀν]αγράφειν ὁ θεὸ[ς ἐκέλευσε τὰς ὄψ]εις. Cf. Habicht 1969, no. 145. It is also at Lebena that the god himself twice instructs a patient in a dream vision to come to his sanctuary in order to be healed during incubation: *ICret*. I. xvii, 9. Cf. P. Sineux, Le dieu ordonne. Remarques sur les ordres d'Asklépios dans les inscriptions de Lébèna (Crète), *Kentron* 20 (2004) 137–146. *Idem*, Les récits de rêve dans les sanctuaires guérisseurs du monde grec: Les textes sous contrôle, *Sociétés et Représentations* 23 (2007) 45–65, emphasizes the function of magnification in the *iamata*. Also in different contexts word and image could function as tools for instruction, as for instance the girl who dedicated a *pinax* with pictures of the gods: τόδε δῶρον διδασκαλίας θύεν τῷ βωλομένῳ ἐπιτελέστων ἀγαθῶν: M. Guarducci, in: *Phoros. Tribute to B.J. Meritt* (Locust Valley N.Y. 1974) 57–66. Concerning the Delian Sarapis aretalogy its author tells us that he ἀνέγραψεν κατὰ πρόσταγμα τοῦ θεοῦ (l. 2). Weinreich 1909, 4–7 presents a collection, and of course the hundreds of

These special *iamata*, then, are genuine aretalogies, testifying to the *arete* and *dunamis* of the god. Hence, we should not be surprised to find other concomitant 'henotheistic' features, as discussed in chapter III, in the 'supernatural' *iamata* quoted and many others: hyperbolisation of expressions of power and abilities, punishment of unbelievers[115] or of those who venture to injure the *time* of the great god,[116] forgiveness and healing after the confession and self-humiliation of the patient,[117] as well as demonstrative and advertising behaviour (*paradeigmatismos*) of god and priesthood through their epigraphical records.[118] Over half of these 'supernatural' miracles belong to the first ten items of stele A and it has often been noted that the *iamata* of stele A, especially nos. 1–10 (and more especially 1–4), with their "clearly impossible tales"[119] and their retaliatory warnings against derision have a programmatic function. They stress the fact that there is no limit to the god's power. "Asklepios here operates in an unexpected, majestic way, not in the manner of doctors but like a god."[120] Of course, several of the features under discussion also occur in miracles lacking the language of supplication, but again only in miracles of the 'supernatural' type.

---

dedications κατὰ κέλευσιν, *iussu* etc. as well as the εἷς and μέγας acclamations bear witness to the same mentality.

[115] Also in the much later confession texts a person is punished διὰ τὸ ἀπιστῖν and another κολασθεῖσα …καὶ μὴ πιστεύουσα τῷ θεῷ: Petzl 1994, nos. 10 and 12.

[116] Weinreich 1909, index s.v. Strafwunder. On illness as penalty in the Maeonian confession inscriptions see: Chaniotis 1995, 323–344.

[117] Examples of punishment followed by healing: Weinreich 1909, 189–194.

[118] An unfortunately very fragmentary inscription from the Amphiareion at Oropos (B.C. Petrakos, *Οἱ ἐπιγραφὲς τοῦ Ὠρωποῦ* [Athens 1997] no. 301, c. 335–322 BC, [cf. EBGR 1997, no. 296; *BE* 1998, no. 187]) in ll. 10–14 provides interesting parallels of this ideology: "Lord and king, strongly [---] (ὦ δέσποτ᾽ ἄναξ, ἰσχυρά [---]), you disregarded them, when they were laughing scornfully at you; but you [---] ([παρ]ήκουσας τῶνδε καταγελώντων σου, σὺ δὲ [---]), [---] conspicuously, when there was no other hope [---] ([---]μένου περυφανῶς [for περιφανῶς], οὐδεμίαν ἄλλην ἐλπίδα τ[---]) [---] alone; he demonstrated his might in such a way, that [---] ([---]ενον μόνου, οὕτως ἐνεδείξατο τὴν αὐτοῦ δύ[ναμιν ---]). I follow Chaniotis in his suggestion that this is an aretalogical praise of a miracle by Amphiaraos.

[119] LiDonnici 1992, 28. See for a detailed linguistic, stylistic and motif-oriented analysis of the patterns of arrangement of the *iamata* LiDonnici 1995, *passim*, especially 24–28, on nos. 1–10. In the collection of stele A she discerns three groups: 1–10, "a pre-existing group" (24 n. 4), belonging to the oldest stratum (32), which contains cures in unexpected, counter-intuitive ways; 11–17 are thematically more concerned with *objects* than with the miraculous; 18–20 are thematically very different. B 1–5 are all concerned with "action at a distance" and the tales are more grisly.

[120] LiDonnici 1992, 38. Cf. Dillon 1994, 251: "instructions concerning the power of the god."

Particularly interesting is the 'confession of guilt', mentioned three times, once in no. 47 (above p. 409, a truly 'supernatural' cure), twice (nos. 54 and 58) with the explicit verb ὡμολόγησε,[121] unfortunately in sorely mutilated texts. For this reason these three texts have been explained as the first tokens of an Oriental influence, where omnipotent gods and sinful and confessing mortals abound.[122] This is both unnecessary and unlikely: they should rather be regarded as the first independent and hesitating signs of a mentality which in its institutionalized form and with much greater rigidity and harshness expressed itself in the cults of Oriental gods and of the Lydian-Phrygian Anaeitis and Men.[123] This is substantiated by the fact that exactly in the Epidaurian cult of Asklepios we find the first epigraphical instance of a pseudo-sacred law prescribing that "to enter a temple one should be pure; to be pure means having pious thoughts" (φρονεῖν ὅσια).[124] But a certain phenomenological and psychological relationship cannot be denied, particularly in the status of the all-powerful god as opposed to

[121] The verb belongs to the fixed formulas of the Maeonian confession *stelai* and occurs once as a variant of the formulaic ἐξαγορεύειν in the curses from Knidos, both belonging to the same religious atmosphere as the one we are discussing. See: Versnel 1991, 75–80; 1995; 2009.

[122] F. Kudlien, Beichte und Heilung, *Medizinhistorisches Journal* 13 (1978) 1–14, espec. 6: "vereinzelte Fälle die vielleicht orientalischem Einfluss, vielleicht auch einfach einer Dramatisierung durch die Priester zuzuschreiben sind." He also (4/5) refers to the comparable *paradeigmatismos*, "Zurschaustellung" in these oriental miracles and in no. 47. In this sense already Herzog 1931, 57.

[123] Pleket 1981, 180 n. 135. For a full discussion of these different positions see Versnel 1990, 197–204. Moreover, there are important differences as well: even if Asklepios may be angry, his most characteristic feature is clemency and mildness: Pindar. *Pyth.* 3.48–54 = Edelstein no. 1; Arist. *Or.* 42.1 and 5; Nilsson *GGR* I. 806: "Das Geheimnis der Popularität des Asklepios liegt nicht nur darin, dass der leidende Mensch einen Gott fand, der ihn half, sondern auch darin, dass er einen Gott fand der mit ihm fühlte." These are not particularly the first qualities one would associate with Oriental gods or the ones of Asia Minor. Anyway, the presence of 'confession of guilt' in the 4th c. Epidaurean *iamata* hardly supports the argument of E.J. Schnabel, Divine Tyranny and Public Humiliation: A suggestion for the Interpretation of the Lydian and Prygian Confession Inscriptions, *Novum Testamentum* 45 (2003) 160–188, that the major cause for public confession was the perceived necessity to reinforce the control of the local god over her/his devotees as a reaction to the spreading of the Christian faith in the area.

[124] Edelstein no. 318, handed down by Porphyrios *de abst.* 2.19.5; Clemens Al. *Strom.* 5.1.13.3, after Theophrastus. Chaniotis 1997b, 142–179, espec. 152 ff., notes that apart from the cults of 'Oriental' gods, it is especially in the cult of Asklepios that the term ὅσια φρονεῖν occurs. He also recognizes the requirement of inner—that is moral—pureness in *iamata* nos. 6 and 7 and connects it with the natural imputation of bodily afflictions to human misconduct.

the insignificant human creature. In sum, these *iamata*, as opposed to the more modest 'natural' medical ones, stress the fact that there is no limit to the god's power.

Altogether, this leaves us with an embarrassing paradox. Edelstein's observation: "the god's cures were medical cures. Asclepius was not a wizard whose hocus pocus perplexes men, nor was he one of those gods who nod fulfilment of the wishes of their suppliants. He acted as a physician", though widely adopted in subsequent studies, appears to be a misleading simplification. In exposing the professional specialization of the god, this statement reveals only part of the truth. Edelstein II 154 n. 34, himself has to admit: "this is true only of the god of incubations. When Asclepius was approached in prayers and granted help, he acted like all other deities." He is referring here to the many private and public cult-activities, supplications and prayers outside the medical centres of the god.[125]

The truth, however, is—and this is what my whole exposition aimed to show—that Asklepios' double identity is not only correlative with the distinction between Epidaurian and different types of cultic ambiences. It appears that in the Epidaurian *iamata*, too, Asklepios unites two different strands of perception in one divine persona. One is very much determined by and restricted to his professional craft, which inevitably attracts stereotyped characteristics of that profession: medical manipulation, drugs, success *and failure*. If successful the god receives a fee, which, just as in the human world, is literally referred to as a doctor's honorarium: ἴατρα.[126] But the treatment may also fail for the simple reason that physicians may fail. While the epigraphical *iamata* in accordance with their name and function were not particularly eager to record failures, in reality people did die, even (or rather especially) in the Asklepieia. A specially designated building outside

[125] See: Edelstein II 182 ff. Artemidorus 2.37 seems to allude to a comparable dichotomy when he draws a distinction between two types of dream, one in which Asklepios figures as a 'normal' god, and one in which he is seen as the professional physician: "If Asklepios is set up in a temple and stands upon a pedestal, if he is seen and adored, it means good luck for all. But if he moves and approaches or goes into a house, it prophesies sickness and famine. For then especially men need this god."

[126] In the *iamata* nos. 5, 22, 25. Further: *IG* IV² 126 = *Syll.*³ 1170. Cf. *IG* IV² 258, 560, 571, 483. More testimonia: Herzog pp. 130 and 136. This should be distinguished from the entry fee, on which see: Dillon 1994, n. 21. The rare word σῶστρα can take a related meaning, as in an inscription from Rome where a doctor, who calls himself the helper (βοηθός) of Asklepios, gives him σῶστρα καὶ [χα]ριστήρια (*IG* XIV 967 a1 b1). For further evidence of this term see: W. Clarysse, *ZPE* 113 (1996) 214.

the sacred area was reserved for the dying.[127] And according to Hippokrates (as we saw earlier p. 402) the scholarly literature mentioned many cases in which Asklepios' interventions remained unsuccessful. In this perspective, then, even Asklepios is curtailed by the laws of nature. His medical treatment is infinitely more effective than human therapy: the god accomplishes what according to Hippokrates (*On Joints* ch. 46) is humanly impossible, arguing that "one might do this (namely applying deep surgery) with a corpse, but definitely not with a living patient." But it is *not* different in kind. The god manifests himself from his most anthropomorphic side, his feats belong in the category of human actions. And viewed from this perspective he cannot do anything he wishes: he is *not* omnipotent.[128]

---

[127] In the sanctuary itself, of course, like all sanctuaries, it was not permitted to give birth or die: Paus. 2.27.6. Cf. Parker 1983, 33 ff.

[128] The emphasis on the typically medical aspects of treatment and cures, already present in the oldest *iamata*, comes more and more into prominence over the centuries. There is also a shift from sensationally miraculous surgery to more earthy kinds of regimen-oriented therapy, a development which has been explained as "the significant shift in life-world from Hellenistic times in Epidaurus to the sophisticated ambience of Smyrna and Pergamum in the Antonine period" (Kee 1982, 129. See also: L. Cohn-Haft, *The Public Physicians of Ancient Greece* [1956] 28 f.). This is also manifest in the miracles at Lebena (IIa), *ICret.* I, nos. 8–16, on which see: Guarducci *ad loc.* p. 159; M. Melfi, *Il santuario di Asclepio a Lebena* (Athens 2007) Ch. 3. Surgery, however, seems to have gone out of fashion: Aelius Aristides, *Sacred Tales* 4.64, reports that surgical dreams still occurred two generations before him, but he himself does not record them from his own experience. On the popularity of Asklepios-religion especially in the Antonine age see: G. Bowersock, *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire* (1969) 70–74; Lane Fox 1986, 151 f.; Kee 1982. On the later cult of the god in Asia Minor (where he is θεὸς σωτὴρ πολιοῦχος for instance in Aigeai, Cilicia): L. Robert, De Cilice à Messine et à Plymouth, *JS* (1973) 161–210. Detailed instructions as given by Asklepios and other healing gods resounding in sources of the imperial period were of course grist for the mill of Christian authors such as Arnobius *Adv. Nationes* 1.48, who claims: *indecorum deo est, non ipsum per se posse, sed externorum adminiculis rerum sanitatem incolumitatemque praestare.* The Christian God, so it is claimed, can do miracles just by his free will and the absolute power of his word. He does not need physical means or natural resources nor are his actions subject to the limitations of Aristotelian principles of causation or teleology. Various different attacks by apologists on Asklepios are collected by Edelstein I nos. 103, 233 (Tertullian); 128, 584 (Arnobius); 294, 298–299 (Eusebius) and cf. II, pp. 52, 62, 109. See generally: F.J. Dölger, Der Heiland, *AuC* 6 (1950) 241–272; K.H. Rengstorf, *Die Anfänge der Auseinandersetzung zwischen Christenglaube und Asklepiosfrömmigkeit* (Münster 1953). All the more ironic, then, that Christian saints simply adopted Asklepios' medical and oneirical techniques, most noticeably in the miracles of Thecla (G. Dagron, *Vie et miracles de Sainte Thècle* (Brussels 1978), especially his discussion at pp. 103–108; S.F. Johnson, *The Life and Miracles of Thekla. A Literary Study* [Cambridge MA 2006]) and Kosmas and Damianos: L. Deubner, *Kosmas und Damien* (Leipzig 1907); A. Wittmann, *Kosmas und Damian. Kultausbreitung und Volksdevotion* (Berlin 1967); A.-J.

In the other type of miracles, however, some of which were cited above, his qualities do belong in another category, since they are of an essentially different nature. Here the god does not primarily act as a physician but as a god, a god, moreover, who boasts absolute power to perform miracles of all sorts—including oracular ones—and without any curative device or physical manipulation. Restrictions of whatever kind are now out of the picture and beyond question. The focus shifts from qualities shared by gods and men to those in which they differ, radically differ. This perspective does not tolerate restrictions as to type of miracle. Here the god can do anything he wants and he knows everything: he is omnipotent and omniscient.[129] Here the words of Plutarch *Vita Coriolani* 38.4 are very much to the point long before they were written:

> For the deity has no resemblance whatever to man, either in nature, activity, skill, or strength; nor, if he does something that we cannot do, or contrives something that we cannot contrive (οὐδ' εἴ τι ποιεῖ τῶν ἡμῖν ἀποιήτων καὶ μηχανᾶται τῶν ἀμηχάνων), is this contrary to reason. But rather, since he differs from us in all points, in his works most of all is he unlike us and far removed from us. But most of the deity's powers, as Herakleitos says, "escape our knowledge through incredulity."

Exactly in this context of ἀπίθανα καὶ ἀδύνατα, in the words of one of the *iamata* that we have seen, or ἀποίητα καὶ ἀμήχανα as we read here, we observe a very remarkable shift in the religious representation which 'translates' this immense distance between god and man into the nearly 'oriental' expressions mentioned above.

Festugière, *St. Thècle, Côme et Damien. Collections grecques de miracles* (Paris 1971); *idem*, Types epidauriens de miracles dans la vie de Syméon le Jeune, *JHS* 93 (1973) 70–73. Christ became the great rival of Asklepios in later antiquity, an *imitatio* much discussed in modern scholarship. See e.g. E. Dinkler, *Christus und Asklepios. Zum Christustypus der polychromen Platten im Mus. Naz. Romano* (Sb. Heidelberg 1980); R.J. Rüttimann, *Asclepius and Jesus. The Form, Character and Status of the Asclepius Cult in the Second-Century CE and its Influence on Early Christianity* (Harvard Univ. 1986); Croon 1986, 1219–1230.

[129] Very comparable with the great Egyptian and other Near Eastern gods of the Hellenistic/Roman era. Cf. Croon 1986, 1218 on Isis and Sarapis: "Bei all dem darf man aber nicht ausser Acht lassen, daß ihre Funktion als Heilgötter zwar bedeutsam, aber doch nur eine Nebenfunktion war. Beide Gottheiten präsentierten sich als Allgötter mit Allmacht." The interesting thing is that Asklepios, starting his career as a medical specialist ascended to the position of a superior god, but preserved both aspects, each of which might dominate the picture according to the perspective of the observer.

Asklepios, then, is the best illustration of this fundamental ambiguity in divine nature. To this god applies an expression by Hippokrates: "they are all divine and all human" (πᾶντα θεῖα καὶ πᾶντα ἀνθρώπινα).[130] The divergent reactions to the miracles as recorded in the *iamata* provide a splendid illustration of this ambiguity: some people accepted Asklepios as a physician but did not believe the *really* incredible and impossible tricks. Others, first of all the god himself, no doubt very much prompted by his ground crew, argued that the god was *god* not just a doctor and hence did not tolerate incredulity. Hence the corpus of *iamata* opens with the most spectacular and breath-taking tales. I am not claiming that we should always and at all costs try to draw a distinction between superhuman and supernatural.[131] A votive inscription from Asia Minor (circa 250 AD) set up as a *charisterion* for a cure thanks the goddess Leto because she ἐξ ἀδυνάτων δυνατὰ πυεῖ (= ποιεῖ).[132] Some commentators take it as an 'Oriental' expression, well-known from biblical literature, and translate: "who makes the impossible possible," others "because from things without strength she maketh things that are strong." The two alternatives, supernatural and superhuman, are both available in one and the same Greek expression. The phrasing in itself does not allow to make a choice and perhaps we should leave it at that.[133]

---

[130] [Hippokrates] *Morb. Sacr* 21 (Loeb) 18.2 (Grensemann), speaking on diseases in general including epilepsy. On the vexed question of the divine status of illnesses see fundamentally: Ph.J. van der Eijk, The Theology of the Hippocratic Treatise *On the Sacred Disease*, *Apeiron* 23 (1990) 87–119 = *idem* (revised version), *Medicine and Philosophy in Classical Antiquity: Doctors and Philosophers on Nature, Soul, Health and Disease* (Cambridge 2005) 45–73.

[131] Arctinus, *Ilioupersis* (fr. 4 Bernabé, Sch. Il. 11.515c Erbse; Eustathius 859.42 on *Il.* 13.515, Loeb p. 525) neatly keeps the two types of curative abilities apart when he attributes to Machaon the art of surgery and healing of wounds, but to Podaleirios "full and perfect knowledge to recognize hidden diseases and cure desperate sicknesses" (ἄσκοπά τε γνῶναι καὶ ἀναλθέα ἰήσασθαι).

[132] Petzl 1994, no. 122, with the literature; Versnel 1981a, 53 n. 218. Cf. Luk. 18:27; Matth. 19:26; Origen. *On Prayer* I.1: δυνατὸν ἐξ ἀδυνάτου γίνεται διὰ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Dio Chrys. *Or*. 3.30, claims that "of all men under the sun that man is most powerful and not inferior to the gods themselves who is able τὰ ἀδύνατα δοκοῦντα ποιῆσαι δυνατά."

[133] Nor would I know how to classify the unique cooperation attested in a miracle story on record at the isle Gozo near Malta where Maria Tapinu is praised for her *supernatural* omniscience in prompting the doctor in attendance toward the correct diagnosis so that he could cure the patient in accordance with the laws of nature (with thanks to Rolf Tybout).

Is this ambiguity specific to Asklepios because he is one of the "newly enrolled citizens in heaven," belonging to "those who are made gods out of men," or "who are named gods"[134] and hence, as we saw, was a 'terrestrial' god close to mortal men? Surely, mythical origins may have played a part in his functional history. First, however, from the perspective of *private* religiosity it is unwise, often even demonstrably unfounded, to draw an all too sharp distinction between god and hero, as we briefly discussed in our first chapter.[135] Secondly, without any doubt Asklepios was a god, already long before the period in which Epidauros came to flourish,[136] and grew more accustomed to that role

---

[134] Thus Cicero *ND* 3.15.39; Arnob. *Adv. Nat.* 3.39; Justin. *Apol.* 25.1, respectively. These expressions closely correspond with Pausanias' terminology: θεοὺς νομίζειν and θεοὶ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων in Pausanias: Pirenne-Delforge 2008, 248–258.

[135] Croon 1986, 1206, summarizes a widespread (Kern, Weinreich and others) idea: "Wie immer auch der wahre Ursprung des Asklepios gewesen sein mag, der Glaübige sah in ihm den Gott der Mensch gewesen war, und eben weil er selbst Mensch gewesen war, konnte er der menschlichste und menschenfreundlichste Gott werden." See on the early nature of Asklepios, Riethmüller I, 2005, "Heros oder Gott," 51–54; of Amphiaraos: Sineux 2007, Ch. 2, "Le heros, le dieu." Cf. more generally, the interesting discussion between E. Kearns and F.T van Straten, in *Le sanctuaire grec* (Entretiens Hardt 37 [Vandoeuvres-Genève 1992]) 103 f. On the basis of many archaeological and epigraphical testimonies the last named shows that in private religion heroes are revered in no more mean fashion than gods. The first named explains that in private religion the emphasis is not on distinctions between god and hero but on those between hero and man. "In the case of individual heroes it was also often no doubt the case that their specific function guaranteed them an importance and ranking, in the view of either individual or group, higher than the general status of 'hero', viewed in connection with that of 'god', would suggest." This may explain the strange situation at the sanctuary of Lebadeia, where the hero Trophonios boasts a higher position than some divine beings. Van Straten also refers to the fact that ἥρως ἰατρός in one and the same inscription (*IG* II² 839) is alternatively called ἥρως and θεός, and Kearns gives some more instances of such double identities. This should be kept in mind even if it were true that the *bothros* found on the terrace of the Asklepieion in Athens marked it as *heroon*: J.W. Riethmüller, "Bothros" and Tetrastyle, the "Heroon" of Asclepius in Athens, in: Hägg 1999, 123–143; *idem* 2005, I, 267–273. But see the refutation by A. Verbanck-Piérard, Les héros guérisseurs: des dieux comme les autres! À propos des cultes médicaux dans l'Attique classique, in: V. Pirenne-Delforge & E. Suárez de la Torre (edd.), *Héros et héroïnnes dans les mythes et les cultes grecs* (Liège 2000) 329–332.

[136] "Spätestens seit dem 6. Jahrhundert als Gott verstanden und verehrt," so rightly Benedum 1990, 216, who convincingly argues that Asklepios' elevation to divinity began with the rise of the Epidaurian sanctuary. Cf. similarly V. Lamprinoudakis, *EEAth* 27 (1979 [1980]) 54–77. A new and fascinating suggestion, not noticed by Riethmüller I, 2005, 33 f. in his discussion of the etymology of the name, is that the name (and figure of) Asklepios, not etymologically explainable in Greek language, should be connected with Akkadian Azgallat> Asgelatas, the great physician: Burkert 1992, 78, with more Near Eastern connections, including the dogs. But see for a differ-

in the classical period and after. The Paean of Isyllos (late 4th c. BC) v.77 addresses him: "O greatest of the gods" (μέγ' ἄριστε θεῶν).[137] To call him a "marginal healer" is—certainly for this period—a stark misrepresentation.

Is the Epidaurian religiosity, as we analysed it, a completely new and unique trend in fourth century Greek religion and hence not representative for other gods in earlier or contemporary cults? As far as we may call it new, the innovation concerns the *institutionalization* of confessional expressions into a more or less dogmatic theological system. Asklepios' omnipotence acquires a fixed array of cultic and rhetorical forms of expression. That is why I referred to them as "the earliest traces of a *cultic* omnipotence." In the background of it all is the eminently salvational quality of this divine doctor. For all these reasons I deemed it worthwhile to focus our attention on this interesting religious tendency. However, the new cultic forms emphasized characteristics that were of old implicitly inherent in the notion 'god'. The vacillation in perspective between human and divine, the altercations between 'self' (human aspects) and 'other' ('godly' aspects), so eminently conspicuous in Asklepios,[138] belong to the fixed and indeed necessary equipment of any Greek god. Sometimes this has to do with the opposition between professional specialization and unspecified range of action. More generally, it is the result of shifts between different layers of perception. Let us return to the gods and the expressions of their power.

---

ent approach: J.N. Bremmer, Anaphe, Apollo Aiglêtês and the Origin of Asclepius, in *idem* 2008, 249–265, with a discussion of Burkert's suggestion at 254 f.

[137] Already for this earlier period the words of Apuleius are true (*De Deo Socratis* 15.153 [Edelstein I p. 116]): "Of these [good daimones] they deem gods only those who, having guided the chariot of their lives wisely and justly, and having been endowed afterward by men as divinities with shrines and religious ceremonies, are commonly worshipped as Amphiaraos in Boeotia, Mopsus in Africa, Osiris in Egypt, one in one part of the world and another in another part, Asklepios everywhere." In later times, his position becomes ever more elevated, as exemplified by such predicates and acclamations as Μέγας Ἀσκληπιός (*Tyche* 9 [1994] 205–212); θεὸς σωτὴρ πολιοῦχος (Aigeai, Cilicia: L. Robert, *JS* [1973] 161–211), etc.

[138] For Asklepios' human (but not too human) appearance in visual art, especially in votive reliefs, see: A. Klöckner, Menschlicher Gott und Göttlicher Mensch? Zu einigen Weihreliefs für Asklepios und die Nymphen, in: R. von den Hoff & St. Schmidt (edd.), *Konstruktionen von Wirklichkeit. Bilder im Griechenland des 5. und 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.* (Stuttgart 2001) 121–136, espec. 130–135.

4. God: Powerful and All-Powerful

"You give destruction to whom you like, and to those that are destroyed you give growth:" thus an Isis aretalogy.[139] "I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal:" so speaks the Lord in Deut. 32:39. We have seen these stereotyped polar expressions of omnipotence several times before, and noticed that they belong to the fixed formulas of henotheistic theology especially in Near Eastern and Egyptian context. But they are by no means foreign to Greek hymnic idiom.

> Muses from Pieria, who glorify by songs, come to me, tell of Zeus your father in your singing. Because of him mortal men are unmentioned and mentioned, spoken and unspoken of, according to great Zeus' will. For easily he makes strong, and easily he oppresses the strong, easily he diminishes the conspicuous one and magnifies the inconspicuous, and easily he makes the crooked straight and withers the proud.

So the opening lines of Hesiod's *Erga* (also discussed above, p. 231, in a different context), the first and best known Greek aretalogy in the form of a consistent series of polar expressions. The passage is replete with formulaic expressions. In poetry gods are frequently said to do things 'easily' (ῥέα μὲν γὰρ…),[140] which is an expression of their superior and unrestricted power. At least equally common is the observation that the gods, Zeus in particular, can make the great small and the small great.[141] Generally, a god's power is often specified by saying that he can do either of two opposite things with equal ease.[142] Finally,

---

[139] *P.Oxy 1380* (Totti 1985 no. 20), ll. 175–7. Cf. above Ch. III n. 150.

[140] As West in his commentary *ad loc.* (*Op.* 5 ff.; cf. *Th.* 447) observes, with examples. So already Nägelsbach 1840, 23 f.

[141] *Il.* 15. 490 ff.; West *ad Op.* 5: "Usually it is not represented as a question of what one deserves but simply as one of God's whim or private purposes;" *Th.* 442 f. Similar polar expressions in the *Iliad*: Ahrens 1937, 69; *Od.* 23.11–13: "The gods (….) can make foolish even one who is very wise, and set the simple-minded in the paths of understanding." Cf. Nisbet & Hubbard on Hor. *C.* I.34, 112. Just so about the God of Israel: "the arrogant of heart and mind he has put to rout, he has torn imperial powers from their thrones, but the humble have been lifted high." Typical of Psalms as e.g. Ps. 147.6, but prevalent throughout OT (e.g. Job 5.11; 12.19; Sm. 2.7; Ez. 21.31); and, less frequently, in NT (e.g. Luk. 1.51 f.)

[142] West 1997, 267 f., with Near Eastern parallels. Cf. Pind. *Pyth.*1. 41 f.: "But all this lies beyond human calculation: a god disposes it, hurling one man upward and bringing another down to size." In general on the meaning of such polarities: M. Eliade, *The Two and the One* (New York 1965) 78–124; G.E.R. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy* (Cambridge 1966) 90–94.

expressions such as "whenever it pleases him", or "according to his free will" emphasize the arbitrariness of the god's interventions.[143]

Not only are these formulas quite common, they also cover a long period of time, from early archaic poetry into classical times and beyond, some of them, as we have seen, into modern times. One of the earliest is the fragment of Archilochos fr. 130 W., already quoted at p. 153:

> It all depends on the gods. Often enough, when men are prostrate on the ground with woe, they set them up again; and often enough, when men are standing proud and all seems bright, they tip them over on their backs, and then they are in a plight.

It resounds in the fourth century, in Xenophon's dictum:[144]

> The deity often takes pleasure in making the small great and the great small (καὶ ὁ θεὸς δέ, ὡς ἔοικε, πολλάκις χαίρει τοὺς μὲν μικροὺς μεγάλους ποιῶν, τοὺς δὲ μεγάλους μικρούς).

And between these two authors, Solon, Herodotus and many others shared both this view and its expression, as we saw in our second chapter. In these examples 'the gods', often summarized under the name Zeus, may be viewed as an alias for the whims of Fate or for the rigid mechanism of the *kuklos*- and the *allote allos*-idea.[145] Accordingly they often concern dramatic interferences in human life. This specific expression of the idea of omnipotence is so proverbially associated with Zeus that Aesopos can make a pun on it. Asked what Zeus was doing at the moment,[146] he answered: "He is busy humbling the lofty, and elevating the humble" (τὰ μὲν ὑψηλὰ ταπεινοῦν, τὰ δὲ ταπεινὰ ὑψοῦν).

However, this does not mean that Zeus inevitably and completely evaporates into some abstract impersonal notion. Anthropomorphic and more abstract notions of god or gods continuously alternate,

---

[143] See: Keyssner 1932, 84, with more testimonia: "Die göttliche Macht wird in ihrer Unbeschränktheit besonders deutlich, wenn betont wird, die Gottheit könne nach freien Willen über ihre Macht verfügen." Cf. *H.Aphrodite* 38: καί τε τοῦ, εὖτε θέλοι, πυκινὰς φρένας ἐξαπαφοῦσα ῥηιδίως συνέμιξε. In Hes. *Th.* similar expressions occur no fewer than 6 times in the hymnic glorification of Hekate (on which see below n. 155): 429, 430, 432, 439, 443, 446. Cf. West 1997, 267 with Near Eastern parallels.

[144] *Hell.* 6.4.23. On Xenophon's ambivalence between arbitrary and punishing gods see: Pownall 1998.

[145] Krause 1976.

[146] The question was asked by the Spartan Chilon (Diog. Laert. 1, 3, 69), but such jokes were popular. In Ar. *Av.* 1501 f. there is the same question: "What is Zeus doing?" The questioner himself suggests: "the clouds collecting or the clouds dispersing?"

already in Homer: "Zeus increases and diminishes the courage in men, according to his will. For he is the most powerful of all" (Ζεὺς δ' ἄρετην ἄνδρεσσι ὀφέλλει τε μινύθει τε / ὅππως κεν ἐθέλησιν· ὁ γὰρ κάρτιστος ἀπάντων (*Il.* 20.242 f.), says Aeneas by way of excuse for his earlier cowardly behaviour. In these words the two notions "the capacity to do anything he wants" and "the most powerful of all" are closely united, as are the implied more abstract and more personal images of the god. Indeed, as a personal god Zeus is stronger than all other gods, as it is elsewhere expressed in a very anthropomorphic competitive image: All the rest together cannot pull Zeus down from heaven to earth: "So much stronger am I than the gods, and stronger than mortals" (*Il.* 8.18 f.). He can force even the mightiest gods, Poseidon, Hera, and Athena together, to bow to his authority.[147]

Nor is Zeus the only god to be associated with the conception of omnipotence as expressed in such formulas of praise. Aphrodite, both as an abstract force and as a personal deity, is frequently pictured as an invincible and irresistible goddess,[148] a tyrant who arbitrarily manipulates all living beings and is able to bring about a complete reversal of present circumstances, as for instance in Sappho's prayer to Aphrodite ll. 19–24.[149] Sometimes she is pictured as a great physical force, then again in a very human shape and with human affects. Euripides' *Hippolytos* provides a glaring instance of the shifting of these two representations.

A similar wavering between abstract and concrete representation in contexts relating to divine omnipotence occurs also in more general expressions of god and gods. When Eumaios (*Od.* 14. 443 ff.) says: "for (the) god can do everything" (θεὸς … δύναται γὰρ ἅπαντα),[150] he himself explains this *disertis verbis* as referring to an anonymous law of alternating luck and disaster:

---

[147] Cf. Hes. *Th.* 49: ὅσσον φέρτατός ἐστι θεῶν κράτει τε μέγιστος.

[148] Often identified or in close co-operation with Eros, in actions of superior arbitrariness, from Homeric poetry up till the novel of the Roman period: H. Parry, The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite: Erotic *Ananke, Phoenix* 40 (1986) 253–264; M. Alperowitz, *Das Wirken und Walten der Götter im griechischen Roman* (Heidelberg 1992) 48–58; 96 ff. Hypnos is very comparable (witness his fixed predicate πανδαμάτωρ). See: G. Wöhrle, *Hypnos, der Allbezwinger* (Stuttgart 1995).

[149] On this representation in Greek literature see: H. Saake, *Zur Kunst Sapphos. Motiv-analytische und kompositionstechnische Interpretationen* (Munich etc. 1971) 39–78, espec. 68 ff.; Eur. *Hippol.* 1280: συμπάντων δὲ βασιληίδα τιμάν, Κύπρι, τῶνδε μόνα κρατύνεις. Cf. *ibid.* 5 f.; 443–458; 1267 ff.

[150] On these expressions of omnipotence in Homer: Nägelsbach 1840, 21 ff.

> Stranger, eat, enjoy what lies before you. God gives and god withholds, as is his pleasure. For he can do whatever he wants (θεὸς δὲ τὸ μὲν δώσει, τὸ δ' ἐάσει, ὅττι κεν ᾧ θύμῳ ἐθέλῃ. δύναται γὰρ ἅπαντα).[151]

On the other hand, the words of Odysseus (*Od.* 10. 306) θεοὶ δέ τε πάντα δύνανται, refer to the god Hermes who, very much present in his most anthropomorphic shape, digs up the root of the moly plant for Odysseus, a feat mortals are not supposed to achieve.[152]

Generally, the gnomic expression 'The gods can do everything'[153] accommodates a broad scale of functions. Its meaning is dependent on context and the speaker's intention.[154] Retrospectively, it can be launched as a line of defence in a situation of despair, either to palliate the ineluctability of fate (as for instance in the words of Eumaios just quoted) or as an apologetic device to account for disgraceful, stupid, or cowardly behaviour, as in *Od.* 23.11 ff.:

> The gods can make the most sensible man senseless and bring the feeble-minded to good sense (θεοί, οἵ τε δύνανται ἄφρονα ποιῆσαι καὶ ἐπίφρονα περ μάλ' ἐόντα καί τε χαλιφρονέοντα σαοφροσύνης ἐπέβησαν).

Prospectively, it may be used as a vehicle to convey notions of hope for oneself and of warning to others—to create a perspective in which desperate circumstances become less desperate—more particularly as an appeal to divine justice and a quest for retribution. The first 6 lines of Hesiod's *Erga* quoted above do not yet give a clue as to which of

---

[151] Very much in the same vein, also in the context of an invitation to eat and forget sorrow: *Od.* 4. 237, ἀτὰρ θεὸς ἄλλοτε ἄλλῳ Ζεὺς ἀγαθόν τε κακόν τε διδοῖ· δύναται γὰρ ἅπαντα.

[152] As in Theogn V. 14: σοὶ μὲν τοῦτο, θεά, σμικρόν, ἐμοὶ δὲ μέγα.

[153] Besides and after Homer *inter alios* Epicharmos, Pindar, Kallimachos as reported by Clem. *Strom* v. 100.6–101.1; Diels *Doxogr*. 299. Kerkidas, *Meliambi* (ed. L. Lomiento, *Cercidas* [Rome 1993]) p. 91, Fr. 1 45 f. [*P.Oxy.* VIII 1082]): "for it is easy for a god to accomplish anything whenever it enters his mind" (ῥεῖα γάρ ἐστι θεῷ πᾶν ἐκτελέσαι χρῆμ' ὅκκ' ἐπὶ νοῦν ἔχει). Plutarch *Non posse suaviter* 22 quotes a certain Hermogenes as saying that "the gods know everything and can do anything." For these expressions of omnipotence (δύνασθαι πάντα), both pagan and Christian, see: W. Bauer, *Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Berlin 1963) col. 410, s.v. δύναμαι; Norden 1923, 154; *idem ad* Verg. *Aen.* 6.117; K.F. Smith comm. *ad* Tibull. 1.3.27 f.; Keyssner 1932, 31–39; Grant 1952, 127.

[154] Cf. our observations in Chapter II. Context is in the centre of modern proverb studies (see above p. 222). B. Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, Toward a Theory of Proverb Meaning, in: Mieder & Dundes 1981, 111–121, espec. 113, on the import of context shows how we need the situation to which a proverb such as "A friend in need is a friend in deed" applies to determine if it is about someone giving or receiving friendship.

these two major perspectives may be intended. Line 7 "easily he makes the crooked straight and withers the proud" provides a first hint, but still vague, that omnipotence here may function as a veiled reference to the idea of divine justice, in accordance with the main theme of the poem. However, when in the *Theogony* goddess Hekate is hailed with very comparable aretalogical praises, it solely refers to her *arbitrary* omnipotence.[155] Generally, in this idiom of unrestricted divine power, there is a continuous wavering between arbitrary power for the sake of power on the one hand and benevolent omnipotence in a perspective of divine protection and consolation on the other. We are reminded of Isis, who was both the fearful impersonation of arbitrary Tuche and the fair and beneficent victor over blind Fate.

In sum, "omnipotence is thus a part of the traditional religion of the poets" (Grant 1952, 127). However, consistency is the last thing we should expect to find.[156] The conflict between divine claims of omnipotence and human doubt in Greek literature comes into view as early as in the dialogue between Telemachos, who cannot believe that Odysseus will return and be able to slay on his own the assembled suitors "even if the gods will it so" (οὐδ' εἰ θεοὶ ὣς ἐθέλοιεν) and Athena, in the person of Mentor, who tells him that "easily a god if he wishes can save a man from however far away he may be" (ῥεῖα θεός γ' ἐθέλων καὶ τηλόθεν ἄνδρα σαώσαι). This clash between the limitations by physical nature and logic on the one hand, and an unrestrained trust in god's omnipotence on the other, is conditioned by differences in perspective, which, as the Asklepieian *iamata* so exemplarily showed, may alternate within one context in an alarmingly rapid succession.

---

[155] See above n. 143. The aretalogical nature of the Hekate passage in Hes. *Th.*, perhaps corollary to her 'immigrant' nature, has been long acknowledged. See: F. Pfister, Die Hekate-Episode in Hesiods Theogonie, *Philol.* 84 (1929) 1–9; Nock 1933, 22; Th. Kraus, *Hekate* (Heidelberg 1960); A.M. Tupet, *La magie dans la poésie latine* I (Paris 1976) 131 ff.; West 1966, *ad* 404–452; J. Rudhardt, À propos de l'Hécate hésiodique, *MH* 50 (1993) 204–213. J.S. Clay, The Hecate of the Theogony, *GRBS* 25 (1984) 27–38, attractively argues for a "critical mediating rôle of the goddess .... by whose will prayer is accomplished and fulfilled" (36 f.). This function explains "the arbitrary wilfulness Hesiod assigns to her and may have influenced her later associations with magic and crossroads" (*ibid.* n. 1). Note also that among about a thousand votive inscriptions from the Archaic period Hekate is the only goddess who is addressed as *Despoina*, "Mistress:" Lazzarini 1976, no. 801.

[156] The tension between the concepts of divine omnipotence and limited power (as well as omniscience and its restrictions) in Homer was already analysed by Nägelsbach 1840, 18 ff.: "Allwissendheit und beschränktes Wissen der Gottheit," and 21 ff.: "Allmacht und beschränkte Macht der Gottheit."

1. *Omnipotence, ancient philosophers and modern theologians*

The fourth-century author Palaiphatos—admittedly not the most dazzling intellect that Greece has produced—in his comment on the myth of Aktaion (*Peri Apiston* ch. 6) writes:

> It seems to me that Artemis can do whatever she wants. Yet it is not true that a man became a deer or a deer a man (ἐμοὶ δὲ δοκεῖ Ἄρτεμιν μὲν δύνασθαι ὅ τι θέλοι ποιῆσαι· οὐ μέντοι ἐστὶν ἀληθὲς ἔλαφον ἐξ ἀνδρὸς ἢ ἐξ ἐλάφου ἄνδρα γενέσθαι).[157]

His little book *On Unbelievable Tales* is the oldest remaining consistently rationalizing essay on the logical, historical or biological problems raised by myth.[158] The wavering between faith in divine omnipotence and the critique of miraculous stories flourished in subsequent philosophical thought, staging *inter alia* arguments that gods cannot possibly do things that are incompatible with their own nature, physical law or logic: they cannot die, give mortals immortality or recall the dead, change the past, or make twice ten unequal to twenty, nor can they do acts of injustice or immoral things. "If the gods do anything shameful, they are no gods" (Eur. Fr. 292.7).[159]

---

[157] J. Stern, *Palaephatus, On Unbelievable Tales* (Wauconda 1996) 10 is certainly right in rejecting Grant's 1952, 128 suggestion that this is a case of irony. Cf. K. Brodersen, *Die Wahrheit über die griechischen Mythen. Palaiphatos' Unglaubliche Geschichten* (Stuttgart 2002), whose pages 17–21 (in his introduction) seem to have been copied roughly from Stern's book, displaying numerous points made in Stern's introduction with language, arguments and examples in the same order (even including an identical joke about dinosaurs!) as well as emendations or explanations in the text, without even once giving credit to his source.

[158] See: K. Brodersen, Das aber ist eine Lüge! Zur rationalistischen Mythenkritik des Palaiphatos, in: R. von Haehling (ed.), *Griechische Mythologie und frühes Christentum* (Darmstadt 2005) 44–57, showing that his rationalism was adduced by some of the Christian apologists to discredit 'pagan' religion.

[159] Cf. Alexander of Aphrodisias *ap.* Simplic. *de caelo* 358.27; Galen. *de usu partium* 11.14; Plin. *NH* 2.27; Celsus *ap.* Orig. *C.Cels.* 5.14. See: Grant 1952, 48–51; 127–134. The argument of the anonymous atheist in Aetius *Compendium de placitis* (= Ps. Plutarch *De placitis philosophorum*) 1.73: "For not even god can do everything. If god exists let him make snow black, fire cold, what is sedentary upright," derives from Aristotle *Categories* 12b40–41, as argued by D.T. Runia, Atheists in Aëtius, *Mnemosyne* 49 (1996) 542–576, espec. 558 f. Aristoteles does not use it as an argument against religion but elsewhere (*Eth. Nic.* 6.2.6) he does cite the poet Agathon in support of his view that even god cannot change the past. In this tradition also belongs the famous argument ascribed to Epicurus, as handed down by Lactantius, *De ira dei* 13.20 f. "Either God wants to abolish evil but cannot, or he can but does not want to, or he neither wants nor can, or he both wants and can," followed by the logical inferences of each of these options. R. Glei, *Et invidus et inbecillus. Das angebliche*

Independently, this type of argument had a long history in its application as the literary *topos* of the *adunaton*. *Adunata* are generally used in a simile to exemplify the impossibility that something unforeseeable will happen, for instance that the speaker will break his word or that his love will ever come to an end. They are often moulded in terms of an inconceivable violation of the normal course of nature: rivers cannot reverse their courses, the sea cannot be made immovable, the moon cannot be pulled down, no one can count the drops of water of the sea or the grains of the sand of the beaches, etc.[160]

We have met the well-known *adunaton* of counting the drops of water of the sea or the grains of the sand of the beaches earlier in the words of the god Apollo (Hdt. 1.47, above p. 398). There, however, the *adunaton* had turned *dunaton*, in that Apollo boasted that he could do what proverbially and philosophically was deemed to be the ultimate instance of impossibility. This is an ideal illustration of the paradox that a stereotyped sample of *impossibility* in the 'constative' or 'descriptive' language of commonsense assertion or philosophical reflection is presented as the *non plus ultra* of divine omnipotence[161] in the 'expressive', 'phatic' or 'commissive' language[162] of faith and devotion. Why, then, should, in a discussion of religious expression, the latter type of discourse be rated less valid, relevant or 'true' than the first?

Epikurfragment bei Laktanz, De ira dei 13, 20–21, VChr 42 (1988) 47–58, convincingly argues that this dictum is not Epicurean but goes back to Sextus Empiricus.

[160] H.V. Canter, The Figure of ΑΔΥΝΑΤΟΝ in Greek and Latin Poetry, *AJP* 51 (1930) 32–41, gives a clear brief survey of the various categories. See also: E. Dutoit, *Le thème de l'adunaton dans la poésie antique* (Paris 1936) 167–173; A. Manzo, *L'adynaton poetico-retorico e le sue implicazioni dottrinali* (Genova 1988).

[161] Not only *divine* omnipotence. Magicians claimed the capacity to do whatever they wished and even perform the very same unnatural tricks that gods could. They even boasted that they could subject gods to their will. "They have the power to bring down the sky, to bear up the earth, render the waters solid, make hills fluid, to call up the dead into the air, to deprive the gods of their strength, to extinguish the stars, to illuminate Tartaros," as Apuleius *Met.* 1.8, says about the Thessalian witch. The magical papyri bristle with similar lists of *adunata* performed by magicians assisted by their demons and spirits. See for *adunata* and the absurd impossibilities called "table tricks of Demokritos" in magical papyri: J.C.B. Petropoulos, Sappho the Sorceress—Another Look at Fr. 1 (LP), *ZPE* 97 (1993) 43–56, espec. 49 ff.

[162] I am using here terms borrowed from the discussion of omnipotence in Christian theology like that between *philosophical* deduction and proposition as for instance in Anselmus and the language of biblical *confessional* expression of praise and worship (Van den Brink 1993, 178).

The counterarguments of the sceptics landed, safe and undiluted, in Christian theology,[163] and as a result, though happily unaware of Palaiphatos at the time, it was with deep satisfaction that, at the age of fifteen, I learned that God was all-mighty, all-powerful and omniscient but that He could *not* make a stone that was so heavy that he could not lift it up Himself.[164]

Indeed, even if they accept Anselmus' famous definition of god as *id quo maius nihil cogitari potest*, Christians to the present day keep pondering—and quarrelling—about the issue of God's omnipotence: is it restricted by natural law or is it not?[165] Many believers are in serious doubt and do not make a secret of their disbelief, sometimes with tragic consequences. During a pastoral program for the Dutch radio I heard a mother, prostrate with grief, beseech the attending minister to at least grant her the consolation of attributing the death of her son to the providence of an almighty God. The devout clergyman regretted not being able to concede her this: he belonged to that modern theologian stream that stresses God's vulnerability, weakness and even powerlessness rather than his power (the so-called "patricompassionism").[166]

---

[163] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles* 1.2.25, gives a list of illustrations of his thesis quamvis Deus sit omnipotens, aliqua tamen dicitur non posse ("even if God is omnipotent, there are some things that he is said not to be able to do"), including that God cannot make the same thing be and not be at the same time; he cannot make opposites exist at the same time in the same thing, and he cannot make the past not be. On the same issue in William Ockam, a generation after Thomas, see: H. Schröcker, *Das Verhältnis der Allmacht Gottes zum Kontradiktionsprinzip nach Wilhelm von Ockham* (Berlin 2002). And the discussion went on well into the seventeenth century: F. Oakly, *Omnipotence, Covenant, and Order: An Excursion in the History of Ideas from Abelard to Leibniz* (Ithaca 1984) 84–90, and, in fact, never ended as we shall see shortly.

[164] Recently I found in Van den Brink 1993, 181, that the question is just a bit more complicated than I thought at the time: "If God made such a stone, He would thereby give up part of his power. But as long as He does not make such a stone because he does not want to, He continues to be omnipotent"!

[165] The fact that modern astrophysics no longer comply with what earlier generations of scientists had assumed to be ironclad physical laws, instead of complicating the dilemma rather seems to offer a way out: (some) physicists and theologians, after centuries of open war, are heading for an armistice. See e.g. P. Davies, *God and the New Physics* (Harmondsworth 1984).

[166] D. Sölle, *Leiden* (Stuttgart 1973); H.R. Burke, *God, Suffering and Belief* (Nashville 1977) 118–121; H. Jonas, The Concept of God after Auschwitz: A Jewish Voice, *Journal of Religion* 67 (1987) 1–13; F.O. van Gennep, *De terugkeer van de verloren vader: Een theologisch essay over vaderschap en macht in cultuur en Christendom* (Baarn 1990[3]) 427. A good discussion of the whole problem including a plea for the reintroduction of Satan: T.H. van der Hoeven, *Het Imago van Satan: Een cultuur-theologisch onderzoek naar een duivels tegenbeeld* (Diss. Leiden 1998) espec. 261–269.

Less dogmatically inspired but not less tragic is the case of a dear friend of mine, a pious believer in God's omnipotence, who nonetheless hesitated to have her diseased pancreas surgically removed lest its absence would prevent God from curing it in a miraculous way.[167]

Others, however, maintain an unwavering no-nonsense belief in God's infinite power, which inevitably entails an insoluble clash with his compassionate beneficence, as we saw earlier, and hence makes havoc of theodicy. But at least this tenet enables its believers to solve another burning problem: that of eternal burning in hell. Since eternal torment of this sort is obviously a physical/biological impossibility St Augustine helpfully argued that the ability of bodies to withstand the punishment of 'fire and worm' forever is "a miracle of the most omnipotent Creator."[168]

This little excursus into modern efforts and failures to come to terms with the complications of the notion omnipotence, was intended as a reminder not to impose on our Greeks constraints of consistency that modern believers are unable to live up to. Religious expression, especially of the type that we have been discussing, is mostly unreflective, very much gnomic, and with no deep interest in logical consistency. Religious language is of a rhetorical,[169] (self-)persuasive and (self-)assuring nature and cannot but produce contradictions with other types of discourse, producing as a result gods that are omnipotent—yet cannot do all things. Greeks—at least most Greeks—could not care less.[170]

---

[167] The Dutch queen Wilhelmina refused to have her body embalmed after her death for fear of thus jeopardizing her chance of bodily resurrection. The same with divine omniscience: During a church service a Dutch reformed vicar once could be heard praying to God: "Almighty Father, we are praying to you from our church in Woudschoten … in the vicinity of Utrecht." He was censured for this ludicrous geographic clue to an almighty and omniscient god by H.M. Kuitert, a professor in theology, who, in his turn wrote many books in which he ardently defended the idea that God must have eyes to see and ears to hear, since, if he does not, he cannot be a god. Cf. also G.M. Jantzen *o.c.* (above n. 9).

[168] *CD* 21.9.47–48. Cf. A. Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell: Death and Retribution in the Ancient and Early Christian Worlds* (Ithaca N.Y. 1993) 1.

[169] Especially the language of hymnody. Poetry in general is rhetorical by nature: G. Ueding, *Klassische Rhetorik* (Munich 1995) 85 f.

[170] Nor should Christian theologians. "What counts is in what *context* these concepts are used. Thus, it turns out again that the context in which our talk of God's omnipotence takes place is of crucial importance." So, very correctly, Van den Brink 180, in the wake of U. Bach, Schüttet das Kind nicht mit dem Bade aus!, *Evangelische Kommentare* 24 (1991) 289–292, who underpins this with a sketch of the differences between deductive philosophical "necessary" definitions of omnipotence and biblical cognitive experience of God's power in history, which he calls almightiness.

2. *Inconsistency in religious expression*

It is inconsistency, then—and nothing to be worried or ashamed of. The Zeus of Hesiod's *Erga* 1–10 can do everything, see everything and know everything. The Zeus of *Il.* 14 does not know everything: he is deceived by Aphrodite.[171] Yet she in turn is outmatched by him in the Hymn to Aphrodite with counter-deception. The Zeus of the *Iliad* generally can do everything, since Moira, one's 'portion', often is depicted as being in the last resort identical with his will. Yet at the same time, his power is restricted: Hera reminds him that he cannot save his son Sarpedon (*Il.* 16.439 f.)[172] At one place Hesiod can tell how Zeus was deceived by Prometheus, at another he can say that Zeus can never be deceived.[173] The Zeus of Solon's Hymn to the Muses (Fr. 13, for which see above pp. 201 ff.) foresees and controls everything, eventually always punishing every sin. The Zeus of Solon's fourth fragment can*not* do everything he wishes: even if his *aisa* plus the will of the immortal gods would decide to ruin Athens, Athena keeps her saving hand over that city. The Zeus of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* is the all-powerful supreme principle of justice,[174] the Zeus of the *Prometheus Vinctus* is a pitiless and arbitrary tyrant. Are they all the same Zeus? That is a type of question that has emerged several times before in the present book, but one, as I have argued, that Greeks themselves are not particularly prone to consider. The central inference is that omnipotence and restriction of power oscillate depending on context. For it is always the context—the agenda of the speaker, the type of discourse, the nature of the literary genre—that decides what should be tolerated and what not, what is supposed to be caught as a marker of significance, and what should be temporarily ignored as background noise.

---

[171] Actually by Hera, but using equipment deceptively borrowed from Aphrodite. Here as elsewhere Aphrodite may outrival the supreme god. Cf. Chariton, 6.3.2: The Great Persian King has heard that Eros is master of all the gods, even of Zeus, … Cf. above n. 148.

[172] "She is only warning him that he cannot sacrifice to a sudden whim his own settled policy," thus Lloyd-Jones 1971, 4/5, in an attempt to smooth over this inconsistency in accordance with the main objective of his study. But, in fact, this does not make him less restricted as to power.

[173] *Op.* 48. Contrast *Op.* 105; *Th.* 613. As noted by Lloyd-Jones 1971, 82, with more striking instances of contrasting qualities ascribed to Zeus and the important inference: "It is rather that the early Greek conception of Zeus attributed to him many human actions and qualities together with others beyond human range, and that in early times the 'apparent' contradiction was only beginning to cause perplexity." For my own, very related but more specific, interpretation see below.

[174] No doubt because here in particular Aeschylus' 'monotheistic' stance comes to the fore: Zajcev 1996, 206 f.

We have seen that gods on their way toward omnipotence may take their departure from their own specialization. This is most naturally true for Zeus whose mythical sovereignty over the gods was a convenient springboard for his rise towards omnipotence. It is no less, albeit in a different way, true for gods such as Asklepios and Aphrodite. Hymnic strategies illustrate how, once gaining impetus, the rampant language of power and excellence tends to hide their modest origins from view.[175] As soon as a hymn[176] to a god introduces terms with the element 'all'—(*pan*)[177] or starts flattering the god in that he is the 'only one' (*monos*)[178] to be able (*dunatos/dunasai*) to do something (or *everything*),[179] or resorts to the use of superlatives, which by their very nature waver between elative 'very' and all-surpassing 'the most'—as soon as these *topoi* emerge, and usually this is *very* soon, the addressee of the hymn irresistibly obtains a henotheistic quality,[180] including omnipotent features.[181]

---

[175] Keyssner 1932, 31: "Die wichtigste Vorstellung ist dass der Gott gewisse Fähigkeiten besitzt, die sich auf alle Dinge erstrecken, dass er alle Teile der Welt innehat, dass er alles beherrscht, über alles Macht hat und überall in Ehren steht." With many examples. See for this phenomenon also: Ch. I, p. 140; Ch. III pp. 283 ff. Different from what especially the French structuralists so emphatically assert (see Vernant's definition above p. 27), divine trespassing on another's field of competence is a quite common phenomenon. Ζεὺς πάντων αὐτὸς φάρμακα μοῦνος ἔχει (Stob. *Ecl.* I.6 p. 24 W.) is an extreme expression of the general phenomenon that all gods may function as medical specialists and that every god can be invoked for any conceivable case of emergency. Generally on hymnic praise as a strategy of persuasion: W.D. Furley, Praise and Persuasion in Greek Hymns, *JHS* 115 (1995) 29–46.

[176] See for all this: Keyssner 1932, especially Ch. 2, "Der hyperbolische Stil."

[177] W. Pöhlmann, Die hymnischen All-Prädikationen in Kol. 1, 15–20, *ZNW* 64 (1973) 53–74, offers a good collection of pan-predicates in later hymnic formulas. Generally on the element *pan-* in words and names: Usener 1896, 56–66.

[178] "Im Hymnus wird der Gott als allein-mächtiger bezeichnet," so Keyssner 1932, 35–39, with ample evidence on the *monos* predicate. Cf. Norden 1923, 243–250; cf. above Ch. III pp. 296 ff.

[179] For this and similar expressions "For you (alone) are able to do this" see: West *ad* Hes. *Th.* 420. Above Ch. III p. 297.

[180] Keyssner 1932, 35: "Wir haben darin den stilistischen Ausdruck dessen vor uns, was man nach dem Vorgang Max Müllers … mit Henotheismus bezeichnet: der Gott, an den der Mensch im Augenblick sein Gebet richtet, gilt ihm als Repräsentant alles Göttlichen überhaupt."

[181] Keyssner 1932, 30: "in dem Gefühl das erfühlt ist von der Grösse und Macht, von der Herrlichkeit und Ewigkeit der Gottheit, vergißt der Dichter über den einen Gott, den er besingt, alle übrigen Götter und schreibt dem einen alle Macht zu." *Ibid.* 35: "vielmehr wird ihm im Augenblick der dichterischen Vision das Bild der besungenen vorschweben, unbeschränkt durch die Macht irgendwelcher anderer Götter, so dass er in ihr den gesamten Ausdruck aller Göttlichkeit sieht." And cf. above Ch. III p. 300.

Indeed, in matters of omnipotence and miracle, the language of exultation *is* the ultimate authority. People who feel the urge to give expression to the *ultimately ultimate*, twist their tongues and choke on their words: the rhetoric of praise and supplication often resorts to a violation of grammar and language rules. What we politely call an acclamatory hyperbole may be rather circumscribed as a verbal explosion with linguistically calamitous effects: ὁ μεγιστότατος Ἥλιος (lit. the most greatest Helios) we read in a magical text,[182] which it would be erroneous to simply dismiss as an *erroneous* double superlative. Dizzy Byzantine titles such as πρωτοπανσεβαστουπέρτατος emerge. The normal Graecicized Egyptian superlative expression μέγας καὶ μέγας καὶ μέγας may become μέγιστος καὶ μέγιστος καὶ μέγιστος.[183] Here the extremes meet: baffling cumulative excrescences connote exactly the same as the three-letter word *heis*: 'one'. In such elative language even the word *theos* may become inadequate. Hence we learn that Aphrodite "surely is no goddess, but, if it may be, something more than god" (ἀλλ' εἴ τι μεῖζον ἄλλο γίγνεται θεοῦ), as the nurse exclaims in Eur. *Hippol.* 359 f., in her reaction to the horror of Phaedra's illicit love (Cf. Ch. III p. 274).

Exaltation may easily transcend logic. In Aesch. Fr. 70 (*TrGf*): a character says: "Zeus is the universe—and what is still higher than this."[184] At moments of ultimate desperation, need or hope, words can

---

[182] In B. Müller, *Megas Theos* (Diss. Halle 1913) no. 225. L. Robert, *Hellenica* X, p. 87, discusses some instances of double superlatives of the type: μεγιστότατος, μονότατος and cf. also μειζότερος as a title of *maiordomo*: B. Lifschitz, *JSJ* 4 (1973) 43–55. On superlative language in epigraphic praise see: Chaniotis 2010, 129 f.

[183] Already the Raphia decree of 217 BC calls Hermes ὁ μέγιστος καὶ μέγιστος Ronchi IV, 787. Cf. Quaegebeur, Thot-Hermès, le dieu le plus grand!, in: *Hommages à F. Daumas* (MontPellier 1986) 525–544, espec. 531 ff. My daughter, when very young, called her father "de liefste van de allemaalste" which in translation would be something like: "the dearest of the allest" in which, though conceptually correct, she was grammatically wrong. However, in Petjo, the language of an Indian Dutch speaking section of the Suriname people, these double superlatives have become normal usage (Kousbroek *NRC* 4-12-87). Especially in the language of praise or blame predicates tend to suffer from rapid inflation. Being awarded the predicate 'good' does not make an author very happy. 'Excellent' is the least one would hope for and in Belgium or Germany one can descry tears in the eyes of a candidate who got only the grade *cum laude* (instead of *magna*, or *summa cum laude*) for his/her doctorate.

[184] The universe is expressed as τὰ πάντα being the all encompassing superlative of preceding αἰθήρ, γῆ, οὐρανός. Cf. Burkert 1996a, 91 f. This unreflected allusion to the infiniteness shows in an exemplary way how this notion cannot but lead to paradoxes, as argued at length by A.W. Moore, *The Infinite* (London 1991).

say what they cannot say[185] and gods indeed can do what they cannot do. Not only gods: Aesopos' 10th fable tells us how an Athenian debtor in dire need for cash offered his only sow for sale. At the question whether she was fertile he answered: "O yes, very fertile. During the time of the Eleusininan Mysteries she gives birth to females, and during the Panathenaic Festival she gives birth to males." The buyer looked stunned, but the creditor said: "I should not be so surprised if I were you. Why, it is quite clear that this sow would also doubtless give birth to baby goats for the god Dionysos." This fable shows—thus the envoy—"that people do not hesitate to pledge the impossible when they are desperate." Aesopos knew, his commentator knew, and the Greeks knew. So why do we fancy to know better? Why stubbornly impose our own dogmatics by denying the gods of the Greeks omnipotence in "making the impossible possible"?

Time and again we have seen themes of the present chapter intersecting with those of earlier ones, most notably the second and more particularly the third with its focus on henotheistic religion. Our observations on the rhetoric of prayer and hymn once more revealed the close relationship of the notions of omnipotence and henotheism. This observation may help us tackle the fallacy hidden in the thesis that Greek polytheism is incompatible with omnipotence.

A Greek who is in dire trouble—desires the restoration of an eye, wishes to be rescued from a seething sea, is starving and craves food, cries out to save a child that is mortally ill—may and usually does pray to a god of his or her preference. To a large extent that choice is arbitrary and the addressee may just as well be a great *soter*-god as the unpretentious hero round the corner. However, from now on the adorant's full attention is focused on this god in whom he puts all his hopes and upon whom he makes himself entirely dependent. At this moment that god is the only one who can help while other gods temporarily disappear from sight. Such a prayer of a high grade of intensity, then, is a henotheistic moment in a polytheistic religion. And the near formulaic phrase: "you can do everything you want, (so help me)" is the appropriate expression of that. We are here confronted with a

[185] In another context even words are not what they are: *voces magicae*, which according to Patricia Cox Miller, In Praise of Nonsense, in: A.H. Armstrong (ed.), *Classical Mediterranean Spirituality: Egyptian, Greek, Roman* (New York 1986) 481–505, not only transcend writing but also transcend speech itself. They are semantically vacant, to be filled with whatever is thinkable or unthinkable. See: Versnel 2002, 141–156.

situational, momentary, short-lived omnipotence. But omnipotence it is: no god is restricted to only one particular service.

Hymns to one god generally are expressions of a lower grade of intensity, but share the henotheistic signature of prayers for help. We have seen that formulas expressing omnipotence are typical of hymns and that every god can be hailed as omnipotent in a hymn devoted to his or her divinity. In this literary genre expressions of praise tend to become more elaborate and formulaic. The difference from the later great henotheistic movements is that in that context acclamations and aretalogies acquire structural and exclusivist features. Our treatment of Epidaurian Asklepios led to the discovery of the earliest traces of a development from transitory, more or less spontaneous, henotheistic moments of piety to a more structuralized, near dogmatic theology, as we see it in full flow in Hellenistic/Roman henotheism. There the worshipped god is considered to be so great and superior, that he is called *heis*, which as we have seen shifts easily from 'uniquely great' towards 'the only one'. Competition between cult communities abounds and totalitarian claims may culminate in global and cosmic expressions of power. No doubt, in this respect, political claims of contemporary kings and emperors have served as a model, just as Near Eastern forms of kingship have influenced the forms and predicates of almightiness in the cult of the God of Israel.

It is in these contexts that terms such as *pantokrator*[186] and *kosmokrator*[187] or *omnipotens*[188] come to bloom. The latter two emerged only in

[186] The notion *pantokrator* is rare (and late) in pagan texts. Ten Kate 2001, 5–24, provides an exhaustive collection, with the earliest testimonia of related expressions in 5th and 4th c. BC. For (Orphic) hymns see: Keyssner 1932, 53 f. The epigraphical evidence mainly of the imperial period: Pleket 1981, 171 ff.; Chaniotis 2010, n. 115. The term is frequent in LXX and early Jewish authors, less so in NT (mainly in Revelation). See: Ten Kate 2001, 25–46. Both in Revelation and in early Jewish texts the term as designation of God occurs above all in the context of resistance against enemy power: *DDD* s.v. Almighty, col. 35–41, esp. 36 ff.; J.W. van Henten, ΠΑΝΤΟΚΡΑΤΩΡ ΘΕΟΣ in 2 Maccabees, in: K.A. Deurloo & B.J. Diebner (edd.), *YHWH-KYRIOS-ANTITHEISM, or The Power of the Word: Festschrift für Rochus Zuurmond* (Amsterdam-Heidelberg 1996) 117–126; Babut 2009, 22–45. In the cult of Theos Hypsistos the predicate *pantokrator* may betray Jewish influence: Y. Ustinova, *The Supreme Gods of the Bosporean Kingdom* (Leiden 1999) 225; 230; 287. On the term see generally: *TWNT* 3 (1938) 913 f., s.v. κρατέω; C. Capizzi, PANTOKRATOR (Rome 1964); *Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* 3 (1982) 25–27; H. Hommel, *oo.cc.* above n. 44; Van den Brink 1993, 50–59; Bachmann 2002, 113–195.

[187] F. Cumont, ΚΟΣΜΟΚΡΑΤΩΡ, *CRAI* (1919) 313–328.

[188] M. Clauss, Omnipotens Mithras, *Epigraphica* 50 (1988) 151–161, collects testimonia of the predicate (often abbreviated as O in inscriptions) of the 3rd and 4th c. AD.

later antiquity, the first already in the Hellenistic period. They all cover the ideas of cosmic or terrestrial power *and* the possibility of coming to the rescue in any situation.[189] However, in less explicit terms already the earliest stratum of Greek hymnody and poetry extols the great or greatest *kratos* of a god, side by side with his capacity to do whatever he wants. And even in the supposed monotheism of Israel praises of divine almightiness and omnipotence are very situation-bound, hence expressive and phatic rather than constative and reflective. They are far closer to comparable Greek ideas and idiom than is generally acknowledged.

5. Conclusions

Our first conclusion may be that *if* the Greeks should be 'desperately alien' they are not so in that having so many gods they must do without the notion of theological omnipotence, but in that *they have so many omnipotent gods*. Or rather—to sugarcoat the pill for the sceptics—because any of their many gods may have his/her share in omnipotence whenever the occasion requires it. One amazing testimony is that even in a marginal private cult in a grotto on the isle of Crete the very humble local variant of the least godly of all gods, Hermes, can be addressed as *pantokrator*.[190] If this seems paradoxical to us, that is *our* problem. We try to smooth over the problem by ignoring, denying or eliminating unwelcome Greek expressions, for instance by classifying them as rhetorical, hence refusing them access to the debate on Greek theology. Greeks, on the other hand, elegantly coped with the apparent paradoxes by means of that virtuoso winking process that enabled them to deftly keep apart the various types of discourse with their often contradictory expressions but which all shared one quality, namely a common rhetorical nature.

This whole argument can be extended to other divine characteristics as we have quickly listed them above, especially to omnipresence and omniscience, including all-seeing. It was impossible to deal with all of these faculties, closely related to the central one of omnipotence. In

---

[189] On the use of these notions (which both can be translated in Latin *omnipotens*) in Greek and Early Christian theology: Van den Brink 1993, 43–67.

[190] Kaibel, *EG* 815; *SEG* 33.736; *IC* II, XXVIII, 2. See: P. Veyne, Quid dedicatum poscit Apollinem? *Latomus* 24 (1965) 932–948, espec. 945, n. 1; Pleket 1981, 172, 183; Burkert 1996a, 115. The inscription dates to the 1st/2nd c. AD, but no less testifies to the incredible flexibility of an (ongoing) polytheistic culture.

our first chapter (pp. 89 ff.) we were confronted with the complications inherent in the notion of (omni)presence. I argued that gods may be either viewed as being omnipresent or as dwelling in heaven, which may—but does not need to—be equated with Olympus, from where it may be helpful to summon them. They may also temporarily sojourn in another part of the human world with other mortals, from where as the case may be they may be either able[191] or unable[192] to hear (and help) the adorant. Finally, they also may be imagined as continuously present 'here' in 'our' temple.[193] The different images may peacefully co-exist in the mind of the believer, ready for service whenever required in a particular circumstance. Each of them may also receive narrative emphasis whenever the focus of a story requires it.[194]

Omniscience and all-seeing capacities share the same complexities. Generally they are specifically attributed to great Sky gods, especially the Sun and in ancient Greece again to 'the gods' summarized as Zeus.[195] But any god may be taken to see everything that one wishes whenever it suits the adorant.[196] This does not interfere at all with the custom of opening the doors of temples during festivals in order that the god (represented by his/her statue) could watch the performances.[197]

---

[191] Very beautifully illustrated by Glaukos (*Il.* 16.514 ff.), who prays to Apollo: "Listen to me Apollo, whether thou art in the luxuriant land of Lycia or in Troia: for thou art able to hear to all sides" (δύνασαι δὲ σὺ πάντοσ' ἀκούειν). See also Aubriot 1992, 96, n. 246; 149, n. 88. To be or to hear 'everywhere' becomes a predicate in later times. Cf. a votive inscription from Sarmizegetusa, 3d c. AD, to Γράννῳ Ἀπόλλωνι αἰεὶ καὶ πανταχοῦ ἐπηκόῳ (*SEG* 33 [1983] 589), and an inscription from Pergamon θεοῖς τοῖς πανταχοῦ (Habicht 1969 no. 133).

[192] The numerous hymnic invocations to a god inviting him to approach are just as many reminders that *from this perspective* gods are not supposed to work from a distance. As noticed by West *ad* Hes. *Op.* 2, who adds that this does not apply to all gods. Zeus, for example, is never invited to approach; he sees and acts from where he is.

[193] See Ch 1, p. 90 ff. In the latter case divine statues in temples tend to humanize and anthropomorphicize the gods. On cult statues being cared for like living beings with bathing, combing, dressing, kissing and walking: Gladigow 1986/7; 1990a.

[194] A good example is that if gods wish to avoid Olympus or heavenly abodes for a time they may seek refuge in their temples, which then are conceived as alternative dwellings opposed to the world of the gods. See Ch. I n. 254.

[195] R. Pettazoni, *The All-knowing God: Researches into Early Religion and Culture* (London 1956). Very illustrative *Od.* 8.271 and 302, where Ares and Aphrodite remain unobserved for all the gods including Zeus, except for Helios who, due to his meteorological position, naturally sees and hears everything (ὃς πάντ' ἐφορᾷ καὶ πάντ' ἐπακούει).

[196] See above n. 59.

[197] Naerebout 1997, 361, n. 837. Heron, a famous engineer and mathematician of perhaps the 1st c. AD, devised a system by which temple-doors opened automatically

A divine world marked by "a strict demarcation of the forces and their hierarchical counterbalancing, *which excludes the categories of omnipotence, omniscience and of infinite power*"? For the last time we have put an element of Vernant's rigid definition to the test. It was the one that enjoyed almost universal approval. But again it appeared necessary to modify it with a question mark. The second, and general, conclusion of this chapter, then, is that no single universal and consistently valid statement can be made about any god, except that he or she *is* a god (and even that one may occasionally be disputed). Gods alternate between unimaginable sublimity and the basest human behaviour, between supernatural capabilities and occasional frailties, and swiftly they bridge the distance.[198] The only thing they need to do is cross over to a different kind of discourse, a different representation or a different perspective. If 'monotheistic' Christians cannot unequivocally grant their omnipotent God the ability to do everything he wants, let us conversely grant the polytheistic Greeks the privilege of having many gods who are all—occasionally—able to do everything they want, in other words are omnipotent. Let us stop dehumanizing our Greeks and, since "the historian's task is to complicate" let us, for a start, stop simplifying their gods.

But are we at least allowed to preserve the ultimate certitude that gods consistently differ from mortals in not being mortal? Even this is not (always) true. Greek regions might boast the grave of a god and myths told about their deaths.[199] The final chapter of this book will be devoted to a specific type of mortal gods.

---

when the altar fire was kindled. See: O. Weinreich, Türöffnung (etc.) in: *idem*, 1968, 407–410.

[198] Homer perhaps offers the most conspicuous and often alarming examples. J.M. Redfield, *Nature and Culture in the Iliad: The Tragedy of Hector* (expanded edition, Durham-London 1994) in the added chapter 'The gods of the Iliad, Amplification' (225–247), offers the in my view most helpful brief discussion of how to understand this (225): "The heroes have their ups and downs, but the gods range all the way from the sublime to the ridiculous. I would suggest that this mutability is a consequence of the artistic problem set by the poet: that of maintaining the divinity of these creatures and at the same time including them as characters inside the story." *Mutatis mutandis* this might serve as a summary of the present chapter.

[199] D. Burton, The Death of Gods in Greek Succession Myths, in: F. Budelmann & P. Michelakis (edd.), *Homer, Tragedy, and Beyond. Essays in Honour of P.E. Easterling* (London 2001) 43–56.

CHAPTER SIX

PLAYING (THE) GOD
DID (THE) GREEKS BELIEVE IN THE DIVINITY OF THEIR RULERS?

> "It is all playacting of course," he said, "but in her case the difference is that she believes in the role she plays. For myself, I find I do not care."
> J.M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, 46

1. Men into Gods

1. *A swollen-headed doctor: the case of Menekrates*

One day in the year 340 BC the Syracusan physician Menekrates felt hungry. This doctor, whose life spanned the greater part of the fourth century BC,[1] had reaped laurels with his superhuman miracle cures. He even boasted the power to heal epilepsy, the sacred disease, which *pace* [Hippocrates]' treatise on the subject was generally believed to be sent by the gods and hence denied normal treatment. Healing patients who are given up by doctors[2] was, in Greek eyes, a miracle reserved for gods, for Asklepios in particular as we have seen. And Menekrates agreed. Defying Pindar's maxim "do not aspire to become Zeus.....mortals should behave as mortals" (μὴ μάτευε Ζεὺς γενέσθαι....θνατὰ θνατοῖσι πρέπει)[3] he proclaimed himself Zeus,[4] since "he was the only one (μόνος) who could give life (ζῆν, which is an accusative form of the name Zeus as well) to people through his medical art."[5] Let us keep this in mind: an etymological pun serving as

---

[1] He is mentioned in the context of Agesilaos († 361) and Alexarchos († after 300).

[2] The expression ἀπηλπισμένος ὑπὸ τῶν ἰατρῶν and variants belong to the standard formulas of stories about healing miracles: Weinreich 1909, 195 ff.

[3] Pind. *Isthm*. 5.14. Cf. *Ol.* 5.24.

[4] Plut. *Ages*. 21: ἐπεὶ κατατυχὼν ἔν τισιν ἀπεγνωσμέναις θεραπείαις Ζεὺς ἐπεκλήθη. Note that the term ἀπεγνωσμένος (despaired of; given up), a variant of ἀπηλπισμένος, belongs to the formulaic expressions referred to above n. 2.

[5] So, literally, Athen. 289A. The word-play is no doubt deliberate since the same expression returns at the end of Menekrates' letter to king Philip (Athen. 289D).

an instrument in the process of divinisation.[6] Accordingly, Menekrates dressed up as the King of the gods and travelled around accompanied by a retinue of followers personifying other gods.[7]

Unlike Asklepios, Menekrates did not charge his patients an honorarium but had them promise that after their recovery they would serve as slaves (δοῦλοι) in his retinue. Menekrates himself wore a purple gown, a golden wreath and a sceptre, and *krepides* on his feet, all of which were characteristic of (Hellenistic) rulers and gods, especially of Zeus Basileus. Albeit his *douloi*, his followers were also dignitaries (just as at the Persian court the aristocrats were the slaves of the king) and, indeed, gods: Herakles was impersonated by Nikostratos of Argos, the same man who as a general had fought a battle dressed in a Heraklean outfit around 350 BC.[8] Hermes was impersonated by Nikagoras, the last tyrant of Zela, Apollo by a certain Astukreon, and an anonymous played Asklepios.

Clement of Alexandria contributes one more divine *doulos* to the list—"a foot-note on the pages of history, but a not uninteresting one."[9] It is Alexarchos, the learned brother of Kassandros, the later king of Macedonia, who, if at all, can only have been a junior member of the club of celestials, where he played the role of Helios (the Sungod).[10] In accordance with that name he had founded a city bearing the appropriate name of Ouranopolis, 'City of heaven', on the Athos peninsula. We have solid evidence proving the accuracy of this

---

[6] Nor is this all. According to Weinreich the use of the term *monos* may have originated as an acclamation by his followers "there is only one Menekrates-Zeus," in accordance with the endless cheers *heis*, or *monos* for both gods and important people. Cf. Norden 1923, 243–250; Versnel 1990, Ch. III, and our discussions in Chs. II and V. Especially noteworthy in this connection is the expression handed down by Stob. *ecl.* I.6 p. 24 W. Ζεὺς πάντων αὐτὸς φάρμακα μοῦνος ἔχει. Demetrios Poliorketes is hailed by the Athenians ὡς εἴη μόνος θεὸς ἀληθινός (on which see later in this chapter). For a mortal as saviour identified with Zeus cf. Eur. *Rhes.* 355: σύ μοι Ζεὺς ὁ φαναῖος ἥκεις.

[7] Athen. 7.289 is our main source. Cf. further: Clem. Al. *Protr.* 4.54; Ael. *VH* 12.51; Suda s.v. The evidence is quoted in full in what is still the fundamental study on Menekrates: O. Weinreich, *Menekrates Zeus und Salmoneus*, Tüb. Beiträge Altert. Wissensch. 18 (1933) = Weinreich 1968, 299–429, espec. 396 ff.

[8] Diod. 16.44.3. "Man wird darin kaum mehr als blosse Maskerade eines bramarbasierenden alten Soldaten sehen dürfen und die Parallelen nicht auf dem Felde des Herrscherkultes, sondern auf dem der sattsam bekannten griechischen Eitelkeit suchen müssen" (Taeger I, 1957, 165).

[9] Ferguson 1975, 108, who gives a brief survey of the evidence at pp. 108 ff.

[10] He was certainly younger than his brother, who was born not long before 350 BC. On Alexarchos see: Tarn 1948, II 431 ff., though his theory is misguided.

account: a number of curious coins display astral symbols: sun, moon, stars, the goddess Ourania and the legend Οὐρανιδῶν (πόλεως): "(City of) the children of Heaven." In a letter Alexarchos seems to address his friends as ἡλιοκρατεῖς ("ruled by Helios", i.e. by himself). "Seems," for the letter is written in a very bizarre home-cooked Greek, the dialect which was introduced by the king at the foundation of the city, a lingo so odd indeed that Athenaeus 3.98E "doubts whether even the Delphic oracle could make sense of this letter." Although the linguistic base is clearly recognizable as Greek, considerable parts of the letter remain enigmatic and we can only guess at their meaning. But the agenda behind the creation of a partly incomprehensible language is not enigmatic at all: it was surely intended to represent the language of celestials, since as we have seen in Ch. V, for those who wish to press distinctions between gods and men, gods indeed had their own language different from that of mortals.

This experiment confronts us with a first striking instance of that strange 'double awareness' of human and divine characteristics in a simultaneous interplay for which the Greek language has a perfect term in ἐπαμφοτερίζειν, 'play a double game' or 'run with the hare and hunt with the hounds'.[11] 'Behaving ambiguously' by means of rôle-playing (ὑποκρίνεσθαι) is exactly the theme of the present chapter, in which I will pay attention to the elements of double awareness[12] and the ambiguity of the ludic in the deification of mortals. In hindsight, this will also shed light on themes that we have treated in previous chapters.

Already in antiquity, the singular behaviour of Menekrates and his consorts has been explained as a symptom of *mania* or *melancholia*, and modern scholars, Weinreich in particular,[13] have pursued this track and tried to explain it predominantly in terms of psychopathological deviations. There may be a point in this, but I shall argue that

---

[11] Most illustrative is a passage in Epictetus 2.9.19–20, where he urges the Epicureans not to pretend but to genuinely live like Epicureans, thus illuminating his argument: "whenever we see a man who behaves in an indecisive manner (ἐπαμφοτερίζοντα), we are in the habit of saying: "He is not a Jew, he is only acting the part (ὑποκρίνεται)."

[12] The term was introduced by Pruyser 1968, 190.

[13] But he is not alone. Taeger I 1957, 157, for instance writes: "Wehen um die Wundermänner der Vergangenheit noch die Schauer echten Glaubens, so vereinigen sich hier Wahn und Unglaube zu einer makabren Szene." Taeger takes an extremely sceptical stance towards the whole tradition concerning this and other divine men, in which not many would follow him today. I have given a critique of this ill-founded scepticism in Versnel 1974, 139 ff.

it is unwise to single out and isolate this particular aspect.[14] The period under discussion simply boasts too many similar 'megalomaniac' individuals[15] to hospitalize them all indiscriminately.

Take, for instance, also in the fourth century BC, Klearchos, tyrant of Heraklea 363–352, student of Plato and founder of the first known public library.[16] So, he cannot possibly have been that mad. Yet he had no scruples in proclaiming himself son of Zeus, and in dressing up accordingly: purple gown, golden wreath, sceptre and lightning. The theatrical atmosphere of role-playing[17]—very similar to that of Menekrates—is enhanced by his *kothurnoi* (theatrical boots), the eagle carried before him, and most of all by his red painted face, as it befits a god. He was honoured with an altar and gave his son the name Keraunios ('Little Lightning').

It may be of some significance that Euhemeros of Messene (who lived from mid 4th century well into the third), the one who argued that gods were former kings and generals deified after their death,[18] also belonged to the circle of king Kassandros. Euhemeros' design of a utopian community in his novel 'Sacred Scripture'[19] may have been the source of inspiration for Alexarchos, just as—more relevant to our issue—the idea of deification of mortal beings may have had its effects on contemporary ruler cult. In the words of S. Hornblower:

> Euhemerism could be interpreted according to taste as supporting the traditional belief of Greek epic and lyric poetry which drew no clear line

---

[14] Cf. V. Nutton, *Neue Pauly* 7 (1999) 1229: "Der Respekt, den medizinische Schriftsteller späterer Zeiten seinen Ansichten zollten, spricht allerdings dafür, dass er nicht immer der verrückte Hanswurst war, als der er oft karikiert wurde."

[15] On Parrhasios, Kleitos and others see: Cerfaux-Tondriau 1957, indices s.v., especially the section 'Assimilations à des divinités à la période classique', 469 ff.

[16] On Klearchos: H. Apel, *Die Tyrannis von Heraklea* (Diss. Halle 1919); Cerfaux-Tondriau 1957, 470; Taeger I 1957, 164 f.; Weinreich 1968, 321; K. Trampedach, *Platon, die Akademie und die zeitgenössische Politik* (Hermes Einzelschr. 66, 1994) 79–87, with the connections with Plato at 84 ff.

[17] This has been especially emphasized by A. Alföldi, Gewaltherrscher und Theaterkönige, in: *Late Classical and Medieval Studies in Honor of Albert Matthias Friend jr.* (Princeton 1955) 15 ff. We shall return to this aspect later.

[18] Plut. *Mor.* 360A. See: K. Sacks, *Diodorus Siculus and the First Century* (Princeton 1990) 70–82.

[19] Ferguson 1975, 102–110; B. Kytzler, Zum utopischen Roman der klassischen Antike, in: H. Hofmann (ed.), *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel* 1 (1988) 7–16. Full discussion in M. Winiarczyk, *Euhemeros von Messene. Leben, Werk und Nachwirkung* (Beitr. z. Altertumsk. 157, Munich-Leipzig 2002).

between gods and great men; as advancing a justification for contemporary ruler-cults; or as a work of rationalizing atheism.[20]

In the meantime, the hunger of Menekrates Zeus has become agonizing. The main reason is that, at this particular point of our story, together with his divine companions, he is a guest at a banquet of Philippos II, king of Macedonia, and notices with delight how his table companions are being served with a choice of delicacies.[21] However, when it is his turn, being a god he is honoured with a special privilege, a *theoxenion*, consisting of *aparchai*—first fruits of the fields dished up on a *trapeza*, a cult table—as well as with an altar on which the stewards make libations, and an incense burner on which they burn incense. Although—as Aelian tells us—Menekrates Zeus is at first mightily pleased with this recognition of his divine status, finally, when libation and incense turn out to be his entire menu, his hunger, never satisfied, "exposes him as a human being, and a stupid one at that." So he rises and shamefully slinks off.

Of course, festive symposia cry out for comic interludes.[22] Moreover king Philippos was fond of excessive blow-outs,[23] *and* he was a notorious lover of jokes.[24] Consequently, the authenticity of the puns

---

[20] S. Hornblower, art. Euhemerus in *OCD*. Cf. M. Fusillo, *Neue Pauly* 4, 1998, 236: "Ausser Zweifel steht ein direkter Bezug zur hell. Praxis der Vergöttlichung von Herrschern." Reflections on the relationship between the Euhemeros of 'Euhemerism' and the Euhemeros of Utopianism, in: R.J. Müller, Überlegungen zur Ἱερὰ ἀναγραφή des Euhemeros von Messene, *Hermes* 121 (1993) 276–300. Cf. Winiarczyk *o.c.* (preceding note), Chapters 4 and 7.

[21] Athen. 289EF; Ael. *VH* 12.51. Weinreich 1968, Beilage 1 C, p. 401.

[22] During a dinner at the court of Ptolemaios III, the Jewish guest Hyrkanos was the target of a practical joke very much comparable with the one of Menekrates. He got his table filled with a heap of gnawed bones (Jos. *AJ* 12.173 ff.). On practical jokers (at royal banquets): J. Martin, *Symposium. Die Geschichte einer literarischen Form* (Paderborn 1931), 51–64, on 'Spaßmacher' (γελωτοποιοί) and their activities at symposia; K. Vössing, *Mensa Regia: Das Bankett beim hellenistischen König und beim römischen Kaiser* (Munich-Leipzig 2004) 158 f. with Hyrkanos at 133 f. For the Greek novel see: C. Jouanna, Un *topos* oublié: les scènes de banquets, *REG* 109 (1996) 157–184, espec. 178 ff. For symposiac joking and mocking at Rome see: M. Peachin, Friendship and Abuse at the Dinner Table, in: *idem* (ed.), *Aspects of Friendship in the Graeco-Roman World. Proceedings of a Conference at Heidelberg 2000* (Portsmouth 2001) 135–144. For Philippos' festive dinners see: F. Pownall, The Symposia of Philip II and Alexander III of Macedon: The View from Greece, in: Carney & Ogden 2010, 55–65.

[23] Athen. 6.76.260BC. Cf. K. Vössing, *Mensa Regia. Das Bankett beim hellenistischen König und beim römischen Kaiser* (Munich-Leipzig 2004) 67–70, with Menekrates at p. 89.

[24] Compare his laconic answer to a letter of Menekrates which the doctor had signed off with "I, being Zeus, give life," whereupon the king writes back: "Philippos

and practical jokes attributed to him cannot be warranted. Nor can the whole scene just described. However, authenticity is immaterial to the present issue, which is not about persons and actual historicity but about the cultural mentality that may provoke either such an action or such an anecdote.

2. *A charismatic prince: the case of Demetrios Poliorketes*

Some fifty years later, most probably in 290 BC, King Demetrios Poliorketes made his last visit to Athens.[25] On the occasion of his entry,[26] the Athenians welcomed him with incense[27] and libations. Choruses

---

to Menekrates: health! (ὑγιαίνειν)." The customary address in letters is χαίρειν. The combination χαίρειν καὶ ὑγιαίνειν is common too: e.g in three of the nine letters on lead collected by D. Jordan, *Hesperia* 69 (2000) 91–103, espec. 91–92. The unique omission of the first word, however, must serve a semantic purpose. Note that Plut. *Dem*. 13 accuses the flatterers who proposed divine honours for Demetrios Poliorketes of "not ὑγιαίνειν." Thus ὑγιαίνειν suggests also 'be sane,' 'stop being insane.' Philippos had his own club of 60 *gelotopoioi* ('joke-writers', Athen. 14.614D–E) and was a great collector of jokes and joke books: J.N. Bremmer, Jokes, Jokers and Jokebooks in Ancient Greek Culture, in: J.N. Bremmer & H. Roodenburg (edd.), *A Cultural History of Humour. From Antiquity to the Present Day* (Cambrige 1997) 11–28, espec. 15 f. In his turn, he was not safe from jocular derision either: H.S. Versnel, Philip II and Kynosarges, *Mnemosyne* 24 (1973) 273–279, but cf. Parker 2006, 257 with n.4.

[25] On Demetrios and Athens including his divine honours, see: G. Dimitrakos, *Demetrios Poliorketes und Athen* (Diss. Hamburg 1937); E. Manni, *Demetrio Poliorcete* (Rome 1952); Chr. Habicht, *Athen. Die Geschichte der Stadt in hellenistischer Zeit* (Munich 1995) 94–103; Mikalson 1998, 75–104; Parker 1996, 256–264. And see following footnotes.

[26] The entry of a king into a city belonged to the central elements of the ceremonies exhibiting his (divine) status, as we shall have occasion to observe throughout the present chapter. Strootman 2007, 'The ceremonial entry' pp. 289 ff. offers a good treatment with the main evidence. For the Roman period: J. Lehnen, *Adventus principis: Untersuchungen zu Sinngehalt und Zeremoniell der Kaiserankunft in den Städten des Imperium Romanum* (Frankfurt am Main 1997); A.-V. Pont, Rituals civiques (*apantesis* et acclamations) et gouverneurs à l'époque romaine en Asia Mineure, in: O. Hekster, S. Schmidt-Hofner & Chr. Witschel (edd.), *Ritual Dynamics and Religious Change in the Roman Empire: Proceedings of the Eighth Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire (Heidelberg, July 5–7, 2007)* (Leiden-Boston 2008) 185–211.

[27] This may have taken the shape of incense burning at little private altars cut from one stone, placed along the roads or πρὸ τῶν ἰδίων θυρῶν at the occasion of the visit of a king or emperor, as they have been recovered in considerable numbers: L. Robert, Sur un décret d'Ilion et sur un papyrus concernant les cultes royaux, *American Studies in Papyrology (Essays in Honour of B. Welles*) I (1966) 175–211 = *OMS* 7 (1990) 599–635; F. Graf. Pedestals of the Gods, *ZPE* 141 (2002) 137 f. Note that in the famous inscription from Teos (*SEG* 41, 1003, II, ll. 9–17 and 24–25) with regulations for the celebration of a festival for Antiochos III, every symmoria (civic subdivision) should set up an altar for the king and his sister and should bring sacrifice on this altar, while non-members of a symmoria "should sacrifice and celebrate *in their own dwellings* as

danced and sang hymns to him.[28] One of these hymns, made by the prize-winning poet Hermokles of Kyzikos, is handed down to us by Douris of Samos.[29] The hymn must have enjoyed wide popularity, for, as Athenaeus 253F tells us, the Athenians sang the hymn not only in public but also in the circle of the family (οὐ δημοσίᾳ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ κατ' οἰκίαν).[30] It was so well known among historians and literary compilers that, besides the text as handed down by Douris, we also have summarizing references to it.[31]

I give here the aretalogical part of this oft-quoted hymn followed by the first lines of the prayer section. I have translated it as literally as possible while also trying to preserve a faint reflection of the metre, however awkward this may sound to our ears.[32]

> See how the greatest and the most beloved gods
> in our city are present (πάρεισιν).
> For here Demeter and Demetrios
> one lucky moment (ὁ καιρός) brought us.
> She has come to celebrate the holy
> mysteries of Kore.
> Joyous (ἱλαρός), as the god befits, beautiful and
> laughing, he is present (πάρεστι).

---

best as they can." On the honours assigned to Antiochos III at Theos see: Chaniotis 2007. Cf. the cultic regulations concerning the entry of Attalos III in Pergamon (*OGIS* 332) as discussed by P. Hamon, Les prêtres du culte royal dans la capitale des Attalides: note sur le décret de Pergame en l'honneur du roi Attale III (*OGIS* 332), *Chiron* 34 (2004) 169–185.

[28] As we will see he was neither the first nor the last to be honoured with hymns, paeans, epigrams. J.-D. Gauger, Der Rom-Hymnos der Melinno (*Anth. Lyr.* II² 6, 209 f.) und die Vorstellung von der "Ewigkeit" Roms, *Chiron* 14 (1984) 267–299, espec. 267 n.4, gives a useful survey.

[29] *Ap.* Athen. 253F; J.U. Powell, *Collectanea Alexandrina* (Oxford 1925 = Chicago 1981) 173 ff.; *FGrH* II A 76 Fr. 13, pp. 141 f.; Diehl. *Anth. Lyr. Graec.* 6 (1940) p. 104.

[30] Such a token of popularity, though not surprising, is rarely attested. Cf. Aristid. *Or.* 29.30, who tells us that songs from comedies recently performed were sung by everyone, including women and slaves, "in baths, in the alley-ways, in the marketplace, and at home."

[31] Democharesa *ap.* Athen. 6.253BC = *FGrH* 75 Fr. 2 (II A, p. 134 f. no.2): including the phrase "the other gods are asleep, or are abroad or are not" (οἱ δ' ἄλλοι [θεοὶ] καθεύδουσι ἢ ἀποδημοῦσιν ἢ οὐκ εἰσίν).

[32] To be frank, the literary quality of the Greek text is not particularly breathtaking either. Ehrenberg 1946, 180: "most certainly it is not a specimen of high poetry," at p. 181 referring to "its simplicity and humdrum triviality" and at p. 197 concluding: "Its unknown author is no great loss to literature." For more palatable, and certainly more poetical, translations the reader is referred to the literature collected in the following notes. However, practically without exception these translations are unacceptably free and, consequently, tend to smooth over the essential terms and concepts.

> An august (σεμνόν) picture is revealed. All friends around him[33]—
> and he is in the centre.
> Just as the friends are like the stars,
> his semblance as the sun is.
> O son of mighty god Poseidon and
> Aphrodite, hail you!
> Now, know that other gods are far away,
> or have no ears or
> don't exist or do not care about us.
> But thee, we see here present (σὲ δὲ παρόνθ' ὁρῶμεν),
> not wood, nor stone (λίθινον) but real to the bone (ἀληθινόν).
> To thee we send our prayer (εὐχόμεσθα δή σοι):
> So first of all make peace (εἰρήνην ποίησον), o most beloved,
> For thou hast the power (κύριος γὰρ εἶ σύ).[34]

Easily a monograph, and an interesting one, could be written on this hymn with its display of a lavish collection of elements—both conceptual and terminological—characteristic of early Hellenistic religiosity. Indeed, numerous are the studies already devoted to this curious piece of literature.[35] Moreover, as one of the most unrestrained literary paroxysms of adoration of a ruler, it boasts pride of place in any study in the field of (early) ruler cult generally, and of Demetrios' deification in

---

[33] We have here, in a non-institutionalized form, a fore-runner of the more official *philoi* of the Hellenistic rulers, so well-known from literature (See e.g. Weber 1993, 23 ff.; 1995, 290 f. with full bibliography). However, circles of 'friends' round a prominent person of course occur much earlier: Empedokles had his retinue of *philoi* just like Menekrates, the early tyrants no less than the later ones like Dionysios I (H. Berve, *Die Tyrannis bei den Griechen* [Munich 1967], index s.v. Rat der Freunde), as well as the 'new politicians' of late 5th century Athens (W.R. Connor, *The New Politicians of Fifth-century Athens* [Princeton 1971] 26 ff.; 71 ff.; 129–132). One of Demetrios' 'friends', Adeimantos, has acquired more 'body' due to a letter of his to Demetrios, found in an inscription at Delphi: L. Robert, *Hellenica* II (1946) 15–33. The same Adeimantos also founded an altar for Phila Aphrodite, one of the wives of Demetrios, on which see: Carney 2000, 169 f.; 209–225. Like the followers of Menekrates, some friends of Demetrios acquired heroic honors: Mikalson 1998, 88.

[34] Next follows a twelve-line prayer with the request to defeat and punish the Aetolian pirates.

[35] O. Weinreich, Antikes Gottmenschentum, *Neue Jahrb.* 2 (1926) 633–651, espec. 646–649; K. Scott, The Deification of Demetrius Poliorcetes, *AJPh* 49 (1928) 217–239, espec. 228–236; V. Ehrenberg, Athenischer Hymnus auf Demetrios Poliorketes, *Antike* 7 (1931) 279–297 = *idem, Aspects of the Ancient World: Essays and Reviews* (Oxford 1946) 179–198; L. Alfonsi, Sull' "Itifallo" di Ermippo, *RhM* 106 (1963) 161–164; Marcovich 1988; Bergmann 1997; Kolde 2003, 378–389, who considers the possibility that the Ithyphallos may have influenced the Hymn of Isyllos, which she dates to the period of the Celtic invasion. Neither supposition impresses me as very likely.

particular.[36] Comments by scholars of an earlier generation illustrate modern embarrassment in an exemplary way.[37]

At this point we must restrict ourselves to a brief list of the most conspicuous religious motifs in the hymn:[38]

- The *parousia* of the new gods as apparent from the prominence of the verb πάρειμι, which is *terminus technicus* for the appearance of a god in epiphany-stories, as are the elements of beauty and laughter, as well as the term ἱλαρός,[39]
- the assimilating wordplay on Demeter-Demetrios. As the goddess came on her wanderings to Eleusis to the glorification of Athens, and

[36] Just a few: O. Immisch, Zum antiken Herrscherkult, in: *Aus Roms Zeitwende: Vom Wesen und Wirken des Augusteischen Geistes* (*Das Erbe der Alten* 20, 1931) 6–12; W. Schubart, *Die religiöse Haltung des frühen Hellenismus* (*Der alte Orient* 35.2, 1937) 18 f.; Nilsson, *GGR* II[3] 151 ff.; E. Manni. *o.c.* (above n. 25) 93 ff.; Dodds 1951, 241 f.; Cerfaux-Tondriau 1957, 181–187; Taeger 1957, I 270–273; Cl. Wehrli, *Antigone et Démétrios* (Genève 1968) 177 f.; Habicht 1970, 232 ff.; L. Kertész, Bemerkungen zum Kult des Demetrios Poliorketes, *Oikumene* 2 (1978) 163–175 (emphasis on military nature of the cult and the special link between father Antigonos and his son); *idem*, Religionsgeschichtliche Voraussetzungen zur Herausbildung des Herrscherkultes in Athen, *Oikumene* 4 (1983) 61–69; I. Mastrocinque, I miti della sovranità e il culto dei Diadochi, *Atti dell' Istituto Veneto, Cl. sc. morali, lettere ed arti* 137 (1978–9) 71–78; F. Landucci Gattinoni, La divinizzazione di Demetrio e la coscienza ateniese, *Contributi dell' Istituto di Storia antica dell' Università del Sacro Cuore* 7 (1981) 115–123; G. Sommariva, Il proemio del *De rerum natura* di Lucrezio e l'inno a Demetrio Poliorcete, *SIFC* 54 (1982) 166–185; A.W. Bulloch, The Future of a Hellenistic Illusion: Some observations on Callimachus and religion, *MH* 41 (1984) 209–230 (taking the hymn as point of departure for an enquiry into religion in Hellenistic poetry); Weber 1995, espec. 303 ff.; Mikalson 1998, Ch. 3 "Twenty Years of the Divine Demetrios Poliorcetes", espec. 94–97; Chaniotis 2003a, espec. 431 ff., an excellent brief introduction to the essential constituents of Hellenistic ruler cult, with a valuable bibliography; Kolde 2003, 364–392; Chaniotis 2011.

[37] Immisch, *o.c.* (preceding note) 6 f.: "Es ist religionsgeschichtlich von großer Wichtigkeit, weil es—in fast erschütternder Weise—dartut, wie völlig eine Religiosität der Immanenz sich schließlisch verflüchtigt in bloße Symbolik;" Nilsson *GGR* II, 152: "Weiter konnte man nicht gehen und ist man nie gegangen;" Taeger 1957, I 278: "Demetrios hat…als erster unter den Königen die letzte Schranke niedergelegt und seine Gleichheit mit den grossen Göttern aller Welt programmatisch verkündet."

[38] Weinreich 1926 was the first to collect them and give a running commentary which, like every publication of this great scholar, has lost nothing of its interest; Scott 1928 offered an English rendering of Weinreich's survey, Ehrenberg 1931 a good discussion, and Cerfaux-Tondriau 1957 again a discussion of the various elements. Most recently see: Bergmann 1997. I give here only the ones most illustrative of the religious nature of the hymn. Chaniotis 2011 offers a new thorough treatment.

[39] Keyssner 1932, 130 ff. presents the testimonia of divine joy and laughter, with reference to Demetrios.

continues attending her mysteries, so now has Demetrios come to save the city,[40]
- the emphasis on ὁ καιρός, the lucky moment, a notion readily elaborated in Christian theology,[41]
- the symbolism of sun and stars, extremely popular in ruler ideology from the Hellenistic period[42] into the Middle Ages and early modern

---

[40] I here avoid being entangled in the neverending discussion concerning the identity of this Demeter, who is often identified with Lanassa, the fourth wife of Demetrios. If so, she must have been dressed up as Demeter. Against the *necessity* of Lanassa's participation Marcovich 1988, 11, refers to the Athenian decree of 294 BC (as transmitted by Plutarch *Demetr.* 12.1), which reads: "Whenever Demetrios visits the city he shall be received with the honours usually paid to either Demeter or Dionysos." Against its *probability* there is a testimony by Demetrios' contemporary Democharis *ap.* Athen. 6.253B, that Demetrios, after his wedding with Lanassa on the island of Corcyra, returned to Athens *alone*. The fact that Demetrios arrived at Athens at the moment when the Athenians were about to celebrate the mysteries may suffice to explain Demeter's appearance in the hymn. She may—but need not—have been represented in the form of a statue. On Demeter's advent as an epiphany, see: H. Metzger, *Recherches sur l'imagerie Athénienne* (Paris 1965) 10. Irrespective of the form in which she was deemed present, real or in the mind, she may have been conceived of as the divine consort or patroness of the king. This, then, calls to mind Peisistratos' entry at Athens accompanied by the handsome Phue/Athena, on which: R.H. Sinos, Divine Selection: Epiphany and Politics in Archaic Greece, in: C. Dougherty & L. Kurke (edd.), *Cultural Poetics in Archaic Greece* (Cambridge 1992) 73–91; J.H. Blok, Phue's Procession: Culture, Politics and Peisistratid Rule, in: H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg (ed.), *Peisistratos and the Tyranny: A Reappraisal of the Evidence* (Amsterdam 2000) 17–48; N. Robertson, Athena as Weather Goddess, in: S. Deacy & A. Villing (edd.), *Athena in the Classical World* (Leiden 2001) 29–56, espec. 36; L. Llewellyn-Jones, Sexy Athena. The Dress and Erotic Representation of a Virgin War-Goddess, *ibid.* 233–257, espec. 244 with n.25. Noteworthy that there, too, the public received the goddess with prayer: Hdt. 1.60. "being convinced that the woman was the goddess herself they offered prayers to her" (προσεύχοντό τε τὴν ἄνθρωπον); Arist. *AP* 14.4: προσκυνοῦντες ἐδέχοντο θαυμάζοντες. Recent scholarship tends to accept the authenticity of the belief in her divinity. With her qualification of 'heroic illusion' Sinos comes close to the appreciation of ruler cult that I will defend below.

[41] For the Greek development of the term (not including its occurrence in the Ithyphallos) see: M. Frédé, *Kairos: L'à-propos et l'occasion (Le mot et la notion d'Homère à la fin du IV^e siècle avant J.-C.)* (Paris 1992).

[42] The closest parallel is Hor. *Sat.* 1.7.24: laudat Brutum laudatque cohortem, solem Asiae Brutum adpellat stellasque salubris adpellat comites. On the Sun as "der höchste Vergleichsgegenstand in der Chorlyrik" in general: M. Puelma, Die Selbstbeschreibung des Chores im Alkmans grossem Partheneion-Fragment, *MH* 34 (1977) 1–55, espec. 7–19 (here: 14 n. 33), *inter alia* quoting Anacreon's acclamation to the Sun (Fr. 380=35 P.): χαῖρε φίλον φῶς χαρίεντι μειδιῶν προσώπῳ, resembling an expression in the Demetrios hymn. Kingship as reflection of the sun: E.R. Goodenough, The Political Philosophy of Hellenistic Kingship, *YClSt* 1 (1928) 55–102, espec. 78–83. Rulers identified, compared with or accompanied by the sun: W.W. Tarn, Alexander Helios and the Golden Age, *JRS* 22 (1932) 135–160; A.D. Nock, The Emperor's Divine Comes, *JRS* 37 (1947) 102–116, espec. 114 ff. = *idem* 1972, 672–675; Weinstock 1971, 381–384. Rulers and stars: *ibid.* 375–381. Similes with the Sun especially in Roman *adventus* descriptions: S. MacCormack, Change and Continuity in Late Antiquity.

Europe. We know from other sources (Douris *ap*. Athen. 12.535F; Plut. *Demetr*. 41.6) that, like other Hellenistic rulers,[43] Demetrios went dressed in a robe adorned with suns and stars, as did *le roi-soleil*,[44]

– his divine parentage in the gods Poseidon and Aphrodite,[45]
– the emphasis on Demetrios' quality of 'present god' (note that this is the third time that the verb πάρειμι turns up),[46] who can be *seen*,[47] unlike the traditional gods, who, with "fourth-century scepticism" (Scott 1928) are censured for their absenteism ("far away"), for not hearing (i.e. not being ἐπήκοοι),[48] not caring, and who are even

---

The Ceremony of *Adventus, Historia* 21 (1972) 730–733, and in *eisiteria* (arrivals of governors): Pfister, Epiphanie, *RE* Suppl. IV (1924) col. 304. Comparable imagery of stars at arrival of prominent people: L. Radermacher, *Aristophanes' Frösche* (Graz etc. 1967) on l. 342, p. 188 f. Menander Rhetor 2.3.378, even spells out the precise formulas required in λόγοι εἰσιτήριοι: ἥκεις…λαμπρὸς ὥσπερ ἡλίου φαιδρά τις ἀκτὶς ἄνωθεν ἡμῖν ὀφθεῖσα ("you come brilliant as a ray of the sun that appears to us on high"). Helios naturally is the greatest or the king of the heavenly gods: W. Fauth, *Helios Megistos. Zur synkretistischen Theologie der Spätantike* (Leiden 1995), espec. xxii ff., but flourished in this position in the Hermetic writings: Fauth, *ibid.* xxx ff.; *CH* 5.3, with the learned note of Nock-Festugiere in the Budé edition of the Corpus Hermeticum I, p. 65, n. 10; Demetrios of Phaleron was praised as ἡλιόμορφος in a hymn (Douris *ap*. Athen. 12.542E = *FgrH* 76 Fr. 10). Note that Demetrios's solar status in the ithyphallos anticipates the emphasis on his visibility later in the hymn: Helios, stars, heaven and moon are the only θεοὶ ὁρατοί, αἰσθητοί, ἐμφανεῖς, on which see extensively: J. Kroll, *Die Lehren des Hermes Trismegistos* (Münster 1914) 98–110. On rulers pictured with solar and astrals symbols: M. Bergmann, *Die Strahlen der Herrscher: Theomorphes Herrscherbild und politische Symbolik im Hellenismus und in der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Mainz 1998); with divine attributes in general: D. Svenson, *Darstellungen hellenistischer Könige mit Götterattributen* (Frankfurt 1995); Kolde 2003, 372–377.

[43] H. Kyrieleis, Θεοὶ ὁρατοί. Zur Sternsymbolik hellenistischer Herrscherbildnisse, in: *Studien zur klassischen Archäologie, Festschrift zum 60. Geburtstag von Friedrich Hiller* (Saarbrücken 1986) 55 ff.

[44] P. Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (Yale Univ. Pr. 1992). See on this aspect in the hymn most recently: Bergmann 1997.

[45] The choice of Poseidon as his father is no surprise since Demetrios as master of the seas had a clear preference for the god on his coins, while the lineage with Aphrodite may be either due to his four marriages as is often surmised, or to his exceptional beauty (Plut. *Demetr*. 2.2) or both: hardly as a reference to the marine Aphrodite Euploia (Bulloch *o.c.* above n. 36, 210), however popular she may have been. Note that the establishment of cults for royal wives and hetaerae was closely connected with their assimilation with Aphrodite: Carney 2000, 218–225.

[46] 'Presence' is a ubiquitous element in ruler cult. See *i.a.*: F. Mitthof, *ZPE* 99 (1993) 97–111; M. Clauss, Deus Praesens. Der römische Kaiser als Gott, *Klio* 78 (1996) 400–433; *idem* 2001, 263 f. on the omnipresence of the divine emperor; C. Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 2000) 232–253; *idem* 2008, 118 f. Cf. Chaniotis 2011, 106–111.

[47] The importance of visibility (*epiphaneia*) in divine presence is underlined by Chaniotis 2003a, 431. Cf. also Chaniotis 2011, 107; 110; 114.

[48] O. Weinreich, Θεοὶ ἐπήκοοι, *AM* 37 (1912) 1–68; Versnel 1981a, 26–37; Pulleyn 1997, 134–144, on verbs of hearing and verbs of coming in prayer.

suspected of not *existing*—arguments whose Epicurean flavour has not gone unnoticed,[49]
- consequently, the old gods only exist in the shape of their wooden or stone images, while Demetrios is 'real', a contrast well-known from later philosophical and Christian apologetic literature,[50]
- consequently, too, it is appropriate to pray to the god,
- he is implored to make peace, to act, in other words, as εἰρηνοποιός, a word well-known from later imperial titles and the New Testament, which puts him on a par with *soter*-gods,

---

[49] Which is not equal to claiming direct Epicurean influences. "Il Poliorceto è un vero dio epicureo, così come deus vero sarà Epicuro stesso per i suoi seguaci (Lucr. V.8: deus ille fuit, deus…)" represents one extreme position, as taken by Alfonsi *o.c.* above n. 35, 164. Cf. Cerfaux-Tondriau 1957, 185: "les théories d'Épicure ont touché les couches populaires." The Epicurean influence is most extensively discussed and defended by Marcovich 1988, 13–17. On the Epicurean 'philosophical religion' see recently: R. Koch, *Comment peut-on être dieu? La secte d'Épicure* (Paris 2005). Others prefer a more general influence of fourth century 'Popularphilosophie.' Kritias' *Sisyphus* 17–21, and particularly Plato *Leg.* 10.885b, contain similar expressions: "No man who believes in gods (θεοὺς ἡγούμενος) as the law would have him believe has ever yet of his own free will done unhallowed deed or let slip lawless discourse. If a man acts thus, it is from one of three causes. Either, as I say, he does not believe (οὐχ ἡγούμενος) or again, he believes that they exist (ὄντας), but are regardless of mankind, or lastly that they are lightly to be won over by the cajoling of offerings and prayers" (tr. A.E. Taylor). Cf. *ibid.* 889a–890a. They lack, however, the notion that the gods are far away from men, the latter of which, of course, comes closest to the Epicurean position. The identity of these 'atheists' is the object of much controversy. See e.g.: J. Tate, On Plato: Laws X 889CD, *CQ* 30 (1936) 48–54; Guthrie 1969, III 115 f.; W. de Mahieu, La doctrine des Athées au X^{e} livre des Lois de Platon, *RBPh* 41 (1963) 5–24 and 42 (1964) 16–47. From 306 BC onwards Epicurus had taught in Athens. Yet, even this does not unequivocally prove that Epicurean ideas had served as a model: below we will discuss a solid late 5th century literary parallel of distant gods, which as far a I know, has not been noticed so far.

[50] The word-group ἀλήθεια, ἀληθής, ἀληθινός, acquires an emphatically contrastive connotation in NT and early Christian writings: *TWNT* 1 (1933) s.v. Cf. also Psalm 115, 4 ff. "Their (i.e. the heathens') idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths but they speak not: eyes have they but they see not. They have ears, but they hear not; noses have they but they smell not. They have hands but they handle not; feet have they but they walk not; neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them." Val. Max. Praef. "While eminent poets opened their works with an invocation of a divine power (*a numine aliquo*) I call in your benevolence (*viz* of emperor Tiberius), with more right because the divinity of the others is based on opinion (*opinione colligitur*), while yours manifests itself by a visible testimony (*praesenti fide videtur*).… Other gods we have received from tradition, but the Caesares we have bestowed [*i.e.* as Rome's contribution to the [divine?] world]" (*Deos enim reliquos accepimus, Caesares dedimus*). Ovid, *Ep. Pont.* 2.8.57 f. envies those who do not have to be satisfied with images of gods, but, being able to see the emperor, can behold them in person: *felices illi, qui non simulacra, sed ipsos, quique deum coram corpora vera vident*. Divine images appearing in dreams, on the other hand, equal real gods, according to Artemidorus (testimonia in Weinreich 1909, 158). See for important inferences of this distinction: Chaniotis 2011, 110 f.

– D. is *kurios*, a term whose (monozygotic) twin connotations have not always been sufficiently validated: while *kurios* generally denotes 'master' or 'lord', as in the later emperor cult and Christology, the expression κύριος γὰρ εἶ σύ also connotes "for you have the power" in terms of being the only one capable of rescuing the Athenians and destroying the enemy.[51]

Demetrios boasted a great number of divine honours, most of them granted by the Athenians, others just his own creations.[52] In 307 BC father Antigonos and son Demetrios were hailed by the Athenians as (Θεοὶ) Σωτῆρες[53] and in this quality received an altar and a priest[54] while henceforth consistently being referred to as Σωτῆρες in inscriptions. Two tribes, Demetrias and Antigonis, were added to the existing

[51] This semantic doubleness is an ideal metaphor of the 'poetics' of ruler cult. While Habicht like many others singles out concrete and actual achievements of a ruler as the essential motive for founding a cult (cf. P. Green, Delivering the Go(o)ds: Demetrios Poliorketes and Hellenistic Divine Kingship, in: G.W. Bakewell & J.P. Sickinger [edd.], *Gestures. Essays in Ancient History, Literature, and Philosophy Presented to Alan L. Boegehold* [Oxford 2003] 258–277), scholars of an earlier generation (as for instance Nock) focussed on the superior status and inherent qualities of the ruler. Nor should one confuse initial cause and cultic perseverance. Even if initially inspired by a single act of liberation (as it often was), once established the cult concerned a god with the concomitant superior qualities, whose ongoing task was the same as that of the local θεοὶ πολιοῦχοι or θεοὶ οἱ ἔχοντες τὴν πόλιν, namely to protect and bless the city. These twin notions are characteristic of the aretalogies for gods in Hellenistic and imperial times as we have seen in Ch. III. An inscription from Rhamnous for an Antigonos, most probably Gonatas (V. Petrakos, *Praktika Arch. Hetairias* 144 (1989 [1991]) 1–37, no. 15; *BE* 94, 299) provides a beautiful illustration. The people honours the king with τιμαῖς ἰσοθέοις for being the σωτὴρ τοῦ δήμου and because he διατελεῖ εὐερ(γ)ετῶν τὸν δῆμον, and decides to bring him an annual sacrifice (θύειν αὐτῷ). We are close here to 'proleptic honours' as discussed by M.D. Gygax, Proleptic Honours in Greek Euergetism, *Chiron* 39 (2009) 163–191. Cf. Parker 1996, 260 and Chaniotis 2003a, 432 concluding: "What places the kings on the same level with the gods is the protection they offer." More generally, the festivities at the arrival of a Hellenistic or Roman ruler in Greek cities (known as *apantêsis*) should be interpreted as tokens of both gratitude for and expectation of beneficies: É. Perrin-Saminadayar, L'accueil officiel des souverains et des princes à Athènes à l'époque hellénistique, *BCH* 128–129 (2004–2005) 351–375.

[52] I mention only the most conspicuous ones; for all details and the sources see the literature in n.35 and n.36, especially Scott, Taeger, Cerfaux-Tondriau, Habicht, Mikalson, and most recently with a focus on Demetrios' own initiatives: Thonemann 2005 and Kuhn 2006.

[53] In the inscriptions of that period they are not explicitly referred to as *theoi* (Habicht 1970, 44 n. 2), though as *Soteres* they were, indisputably, viewed as gods (Habicht 1970, 157; Mikalson 1998, 80).

[54] B. Dreyer, The *Hiereus* of the *Soteres*: Plut. *Dem.* 10.4, 46.2, *GRBS* 39 (1998) 23–38. In 311 the Skeptians had anticipated this by awarding Antigonos and his sons a *temenos*, altar, statue (note: not an image), sacrifices, games, and an annual *panegyris* (*OGIS* 6, espec. ll. 20–33). See espec. Habicht 1970, 42 ff.

ten tribes, and, accordingly, the two rulers acquired the status of *phylai* gods.[55] Simultaneously with these honours, the Athenians, first of the Greeks, proclaimed Demetrios 'King' (Plut. *Demetr.* 10.3).[56] In 304, at his arrival in Athens, Demetrios was baptized Θεὸς καταιβάτης—an epithet, like *soter*, usually associated with Zeus in particular—connoting the sudden appearance of a god among humans. An altar for the 'descending' god was erected at the spot where he had left his carriage when he entered Athens for the first time. It should be noted that the divine identifications as *Soter*, eponymous phyle-god and *Kataibates*, all three profusely furnished with cultic apparatus, referred to totally different gods, a remarkable type of accumulation that we also find in the hymn.

The Athenians assigned the new god part of the Parthenon (the *opisthodomos*) as housing,[57] where he entertained a bevy of *hetaerai* referred to by Plutarch as whores (πόρναι): "eine Orgie schamloser Asebie" (v. Wilamowitz 1931, II 268). A sacred marriage with Athena, whom Demetrios used to call "his elder sister," may have been considered.[58] In 294 the people took a decree[59] stipulating that "whenever Demetrios visits the city he shall be received with the honours—including *theoxenia*—usually paid to either Demeter or Dionysos."

---

[55] Note that they did not become tribe *heroes* like the other ten eponyms, but remained gods.

[56] Utopias require kings: Versnel 1993, 201; 206, and on Kronos, the first utopian king: *ibid.* 95–99. Cf. Mikalson 1998, 83: "If, as I have claimed (Mikalson 1991, 196–201), the model for human piety towards the gods was the relationship of a subject to his king, it may not be coincidental that the Athenians, first of the Greeks and simultaneously with these divine honours, proclaimed Demetrios 'king' (Plut. *Dem.* 10.3). Certainly not consciously (…) the Athenians were fitting Demetrios into a model that would allow them to give him divine honours."

[57] See Kuhn 2006, 272–275. In 306, at Delos, Demetrios was temporarily accommodated in the tempel of Apollo. Like his irregular initiation in the Eleusinian mysteries this blasphemy did not remain without criticism: "He who compressed the year to a single month, who treated the Acropolis as a tavern and introduced the call-girls to the maiden. (…..) This is what subverts democracy, not comedy," thus Philippides Fr. 25 K/A (cf. below n. 92).

[58] "But he disdained the goddess since he could not marry her statue" (Clem. Al. *Protr.* 4.54.6). Scheer 2000, 271–279, espec. 277–279, discusses and rejects the historicity of the marriage between the king and the statue of Athena. However, courting a goddess, especially Athena, is a *topos* in Hellenistic ruler ideology: Rhianos (*o.c.* below n. 120). Cf. Kotus of Thracia as described by Theopompos (Athen 12.531F; *FGrH* 115 fr. 31).

[59] For this decree as transmitted by Plutarch *Demetr.* 12.1–12.2, see: W.S. Ferguson, Demetrius Poliorcetes and the Hellenic League, *Hesperia* 17 (1948) 112–136, espec. 131 n.43, and *FGrH* 328, F. 166, p. 542 f.

Demetrieia (festivals for Demetrios) were established and are also reported for several other cities in Greece. They were framed on the model of the Dionysia, indeed to such an extent that some later authors understood that the Athenians had turned their Dionysia into Demetrieia.[60]

Among numerous other features illuminating the religious atmosphere of early Hellenistic culture, there is one that may help us, if not to understand, yet at least to become more familiar with the true nature of the phenomenon that I will call 'playing the god'. Interpreters of the Ithyphallos have often surmised that Demetrios in the divine epiphany of the first lines *personalizes* Dionysos, as, in other contexts as well, the king displayed marked Dionysiac traits.[61] Yet Demetrios *is* not Dionysos, since he is referred to by his own name. The hymn also closely *associates* him *with* Demeter.[62] Yet he is not her spouse, which would make him another Zeus or Poseidon. He is also *compared with* the Sun, but this does not *make* him god Helios.[63] He is *addressed as* son of Aphrodite and Poseidon, without being that in the literal sense

---

[60] Plut. *Demetr*. 12.2: καὶ τῶν ἑορτῶν τὰ Διονύσια μετωνόμασαν Δημήτρια, where some scholars try to save Plutarch by rectifying the text into μετωνόμασαν ‹Διονύσια καὶ› Δημήτρια. Anyway, such a rebaptizing cannot be historical since Dionysia continued to be recorded and in one inscription Demetria and Dionysia appear together. Cf. Habicht 1970, 53 ff., espec. 53: "Dionysien und Demetrien sind vielmehr ein einheitliches Fest mit doppeltem Namen gewesen." See especially the thorough discussion by Thonemann 2005, 78–81, who argues that the Demetrieia were a theatrical re-enactment of Demetrios' entry in Athens in 296/5, as an imitation of the Dionysia which re-enacted Dionysos' arrival in Athens. Recently on the Dionysiac aspects of Demetrios: Chaniotis 2011, 100–114 and on Dionysiac elements in the honoring of Antiochos III at Teos: Chaniotis 2003b.

[61] Among others Kolde 2003, 385, who after others argues that ll. 7–8 certainly describe him as the god Dionysos. Of course, the genre ithyphall(ik)os is typically Dionysiac. Think also of the Dionysia "replaced" (see preceding note) by the Demetria, in which the Dionysiac *technitai*—the professional actors—took an important part. For further details see Cerfaux-Tondriau 1957, 180 f. and especially Chaniotis in his two studies cited in the preceding footnote. On the special preference of the Antigonids for Dionysos, as well as on Hellenistic rulers' assimilation with gods, see: R. Thomas, *Eine postume Statuette Ptolemaios' IV und ihr historische Kontext. Zur Götterangleichung hellenistischer Herscher* (Mainz 2002).

[62] While the goddess comes to celebrate τὰ σεμνὰ μυστήρια the god Demetrios represents a σεμνόν τι. The word *semnos* is characteristic of Demeter and her cult.

[63] Which—just as an aside—would unbearably complicate familial affiliations: his father Antigonos had already been referred to as "son of the Sun" (Ἡλίου παῖδα) and "Son of the Sun and God" (Ἡλίου παῖδα καὶ θεόν) in an enkomion by Hermodotos (Plut. *Mor*. 182C; 360C).

of the word which would make him either another Aeneas or another Polyphemos respectively.[64]

This alarmingly naive and indeed bluntly reductionist phrasing of the problems inherent in the accumulation of divine associations is, I hasten to say, intentional. I thus hope to demonstrate that, if taken literally—and hence scrutinized in terms of its (mythological) coherence, implications and consequences—the hymn would convey a desperately chaotic and inconsistent picture. To avoid this chaos, I would once more—as in our first chapter (and in most others)—suggest *that we not do this*; in other words neither extend the different associations to the total gamut of their conventional mythological implications (since this is not their intended function in the hymn), nor interconnect the different statements. They are hints, flashes, evoking temporary roles, and thus metaphorically prompting different qualities and virtues of the object of praise. Each *virtue* can—and should—be stored in the mind of the reader (or singer) in order to be accumulated into an all-encompassing image of bliss, whereas each individual *role*, after having delivered its message, can—and must—be discarded, to make place for the next one. Viewed together—all remaining active in the consciousness of the reader—the roles would yield a *mess*. Taken successively, hence separately, they yield a mess*age*.[65] Viewed in this way

---

[64] As so often, it was A.D. Nock, who already in 1930, in his ground-breaking article ΣΥΝΝΑΟΣ Θ EOS (= Nock 1972, 202–251) elucidated these and other essential distinctions: "But it is essential that we should understand that what sounds like formal identification is often only a kind of association or comparison" (*ibid.* 235), where my only suggestion would be to change "only" into "actually."

[65] See Gauger 1984, 268, who among the different divine associations in the Ithyphallos distinguishes successively: 1) "suggestive Zusammenstellung von Gott und Mensch (Demetrios und Demeter)"; 2) "Zuschreibung göttlicher Attribute"; 3) "kosmischer Vergleich" (Helios); 4) "mythologische Neukonstruktion" (Sohn des Poseidon und Aphrodite)". Also Weber 1995, 304: "Er enthält einerseits eine *Parallelisierung* des Demetrios *mit* Demeter, eine *Darstellung als* Dionysos und *die Anrede als* Sohn von Poseidon und Aphrodite" (my italics). Very to the point Bergmann 1997, 40, discussing the Hellenistic imagery of rulers displaying an accumulation of attributes that belong to several different gods: "Die Attribute müssen *einzeln* gelesen werden," (my italics) and referring to the analogy with the at first sight confusing affiliation of Demetrios with both Poseidon and Aphrodite: "Wenn (…) die Filiationen einzeln gelesen werden müssen und auf Eigenschaften des Königs hinweisen, die im Bereich dieser Götter angesiedelt sind, dann ist diese Akklamation das verbale Gegenstück zu den Herrscherbildnissen mit den kumulierten Attributen der Göttern." Cf. also P. van Nuffelen, Le culte des souverains hellénistiques, *AncSoc* 29 (1998–1999) 175–189, on the essential role of the associations of kings with gods.

the hymn may make an important contribution to the central issue of this chapter concerning the problems evoked by ruler cult.

I will postpone a brief discussion of the risks inherent in comparison on the one hand and of the application of logical reasoning on religious issues on the other till later in this chapter. But this is the right moment to refer to an important observation concerning allegory and personification, made by Barbara Borg 2002, 311 ff., which is relevant to the questions of allegorical interpretation that we just discussed. She argues that with respect to the allegorical structure of images as well as to their message it is immaterial whether personifications are conceived of as poetical fictions or as divine figures. Just as in archaic and classical times the categories '(historical) fact' and 'fiction' were not essential for the assessment of the 'value' of a narrative, so, too, in visual art the fictionality of the representation is not seminal to the appraisal of the degree of its truthfulness.[66] And she adds (313):

> In addition, the semantic fuzziness of visual representations allows each individual 'reader' a scope for inspiration (within the limits set by the 'rhetorical' strategy) that surely contributed to the attractiveness of the images as well, and that also *lent them a potential for a range of meanings, which could be covered only ponderously and with difficulty by abstract verbal discourse* (my italics).

The italicized part in particular seems to me to be relevant to the ways in which the divinity of the ruler was moulded in word and act.

Two new gods on the brink of the Hellenistic period, a doctor and a king. They were preceded by some and succeeded by many others. It has often been argued that in this period rulers took over the niche that was left vacant by the fading gods. Here is Dodds' (1951, 242) comment on the Demetrios hymn:

> When the old gods withdraw, the empty thrones cry out for a successor, and with good management, or even without management, almost any perishable bag of bones may be hoisted into the vacant seat.

This point of view raises all kinds of questions—which I will not broach—but also provoked, or was inspired by, the fatally misconceived

---

[66] Cf. C. Gill, Plato on Falsehood—non Fiction, in: C. Gill & T.P. Wiseman (edd.), *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World* (Exeter 1993) 38–87. Recent work on personification: E. Stanford & J. Herrin (edd.), *Personification in the Greek World: From Antiquity to Byzantium* (Aldershot 200). I thank the author for the English translation of her German text, that she made on my request.

sceptical assessment of Greek ruler-cult which dominated the greater part of the twentieth century debate. And this in fact directly concerns our present issue.

2. Modern Perplexities

That Greeks could have deified and worshipped human beings—even if they were kings—was a *skandalon* to (most) classicists of the first half of the last century. The divine Nilsson in his still indispensable masterpiece on Greek religion (*GGR* II, 153) qualified the Hellenistic epoch as "die Periode des tiefsten Verfalls der Religion und der schlimmsten Orgien des Menschenkultes" (the period of the vilest decay of religion and of the most abominable orgies of the cult of mortals), and G. Murray[67] in his widely read "Five Stages of Greek Religion" for this very reason gave his chapter on Hellenistic Religion the title: 'The Failure of Nerve', in which he was followed by Dodds whose Hellenistic chapter in "The Greeks and the Irrational" was entitled: 'Fear of Freedom'. Nilsson and Murray were pre-war gentlemen and, as gentlemen, were disappointed in the regrettable behaviour of *their* Greeks. Yet, indignation presupposes at least the recognition of the reality censured. Others could not even admit as much.

One strategy to get rid of irritating evidence is to explain it away. How far scholars may be prepared to go can be demonstrated by a notorious and most illuminative case, viz. the manipulation of the evidence concerning one of the earliest attestations of divine honours for a ruler, the Spartan admiral Lysander, 'liberator' of Athens' last ally, Samos, in 404 BC. A century later, the historian Douris—himself an inhabitant of that island—relates that the grateful Samians erected an altar for Lysander, honoured him with sacrifices, agones and paeans and renamed the great games in honour of Hera as Lysandreia. Particularly those scholars who blamed the abomination of ruler-cult on Oriental influences[68] after Alexander, performed miracles in their

[67] On this scholar: Chr. Stray (ed.), *Gilbert Murray Reassessed. Hellenism, Theatre, and International Politics* (Oxford 2007), in particular Robert Parker's contribution on the writings of Greek Religion, pp. 81–102.

[68] Especially Taeger, whose undisguised racist interpretations—e.g. "hier wie dort hat der fremde Blutzustrom die religiöse Haltung tief beeinflusst"—was duly put to the sword by Habicht 1970, 274 f. Nevertheless, P. Cartledge, *Agesilaus and the Crisis of Sparta* (Baltimore 1987) 82–86, still attributes this first cultic deification of a living

attempts to smooth away this evidence. First, Douris "ist notorisch nicht ganz zuverlässig" and, secondly, an event so shocking as the rebaptizing of Heraia into Lysandreia, if historical, would no doubt have been mentioned in other ancient sources too. Perhaps a statue of Lysander, carried along in the festive procession, had enticed Douris into his false interpretation. Or, perhaps an Athenian comedy writer had made a joke: "the Samians have changed their Heraia into Lysandreia", and the irony was taken as historical fact by—again—*bête noire* Douris. No less a scholar than A.D. Nock accepted this suggestion. It is the great merit of Chr. Habicht to have refuted all these arguments one after the other, concluding that there was no objective reason whatever to distrust the evidence concerning the divine honours for Lysander. He did this in the first edition of his *Gottmenschentum und Griechische Städte.*[69] Eight years later, in 1964, an inscription was found on Samos with the text:....[τῶ]ι παγκρατίωι τετράκις Λυσάνδρεια.[70] These four words irrefutably prove, first, that the Lysandreia were *not* a comic invention, secondly, that they must have taken the place of the older Heraia, or may have been added to them and indeed have existed for at least four years, and, thirdly, that on this particular point Douris was correct, so that there is no reason anymore to distrust, without conclusive arguments, his other assertions. Quite another question, of course, is, whether Lysander was really believed to be a 'real' god, a question, however, which concerns all rulers honoured with ἰσόθεοι τιμαί.

This question—to which we shall return shortly—triggered another solution, namely to smooth over ruler cult by unmasking and thus disqualifying it as a *political* religion. In his best-seller "Hellenistic Civilisation" W.W. Tarn accepted the reality of ruler cult adding:

> This expresses a truth provided the emphasis is placed on 'political', for it had nothing to do with religious feeling (....) it was rendered possible by the general disbelief of the educated classes, for the Olympian religion was spiritually dead.

---

human being to Oriental influences, which he assumes to have been substantial at Samos with its famous harbour.

[69] Habicht 1956, 3 ff., where one can find full bibliographical data. He concludes: "der samische Kult Lysanders ist nicht nur einwandfrei bezeugt, sondern war in seinen Formen der Kult eines Gottes."

[70] E. Homann-Wedeking, *Arch. Anz.* 1965, 440. Cf. Habicht 1970, 243 f.

Practically no word of this statement—which met with wide support in his time—can be maintained as recent scholarship and in particular Simon Price with his book "Ritual and Power" have shown.[71]

Greeks cannot have been so confused that they considered their rulers to be gods, can they? Can't they? "A twin is not a person, he is a bird," say the African Nuer; "I am a red parrot," says a South American Bororo; "I am the bride of Christ," says a Roman Catholic nun;[72] "Men are pigs," says an uncharitable feminist. "Demetrios is a god," says an Athenian citizen. Each of them will have serious problems in grasping the meaning of each of the others' statement. In fact, we are so helpless in appreciating different types of classification, predication, metaphor or simile—including different implications of the copula 'to be'—that we prefer to deny that these expressions can have really meant what they say they mean.[73] The Bororo confession, for instance, has generated a notorious and apparently endless discussion on the precise meaning of the identification with a parrot, *inter alia* featuring the argument that a Bororo cannot possibly *be* a parrot since "he does not try to *mate* with other parakeets." I think only a Dutch scholar can push complications to the frontiers by asking the question: "Are the Bororo Parrots or Are We?"[74]

It is especially in the study of religion that scholarly prejudice with respect to the limits of the imaginable tends to erect forbidding bar-

---

[71] Also in earlier times different voices could be heard. Ehrenberg 1946, 189: "we must be careful not to regard it (i.e. ruler cult) as megalomania on the part of the rulers or as servile flattery on that of the subjects," adding (190): "It has been rightly called a 'political religion.' But then it was not only politics, but also *genuine* religion" (my italics).

[72] See above all the brilliant discussion by Smith 1978, Ch. 12 'I am a parrot (red)', with the 'mating parakeets' quoted at p.267, and the prehistory of the scholarly discussion at p. 268 n.18. Cf. *ibid*. 296–299, and the exemplary treatment of alternating denotations of one person: the *magus*, the miracle worker as *theios aner*, and the Son of God (190–207). On the Nuer 'twin-bird' introduced by E.E. Evans-Pritchard see the ample bibliography at p. 280 n.56. A more recent, very instructive, treatment: T. Turner, "We are Parrots," "Twins are Birds": Plays of Tropes as Operational Structure, in: Fernandez 1991, 121–158. On the implications of the 'Bride of Christ' confession *vel similia* ("I am saved by the blood of the Lamb") see: R. Fowler, *Homo Religiosus: Sociological Problems in the Study of Religion* (London 1974). On the complications of interpreting Greek *theos* when used as a predicate see: Price 1984b and below.

[73] For Greek εἶναι there is Ch.H. Kahn, *The Verb 'Be' in Ancient Greek* (Dordrecht 1973), who argues for a (near-)exclusively predicative function of the verb. Reconsiderations in: *idem*, *Essays on Being* (Oxford/New York 2009).

[74] Th.P. van Baaren, in: *Liber Amicorum: Studies in Honor of C.J. Bleeker* (Leiden 1969) 8–13.

riers on our way to understanding. J.S. Helfer,[75] himself a historian of religion, writes

> The situation of historians of religions often fails to permit an alien world of meaning to retain its integrity because the scholar's ultimate values are threatened.

And he mentions celebrities such as Rudolph Otto, Van der Leeuw and Eliade among the scholars "whose conclusions are too clearly functions of what they assume to be limits of understanding; ultimacy situates scholarship and determines it."[76] Unfortunately, there is little reason for assuming that minor scholars suffer from minor prejudices.

We have seen some baffling attempts, launched by modern scholars, to discredit displeasing *testimonies* of early cultic honours for generals or kings, one of which, however, was unequivocally refuted by a more recent epigraphical finding. We have seen attempts to discredit the religious quality of ruler cult. For some sceptics the only way to come to terms with the Athenian hymn to Demetrios is by underlining its idiosyncrasy,[77] and/or by accommodating it in the register of the practical joke,[78] where the treatment of Menekrates by Philippos

---

[75] J.S. Helfer (ed.), *On Method in the History of Religions*, *H&T* Beiheft 8 (1968), 1–7.

[76] Or, in the words of Carney 2000, 211: "Our understanding of ruler cult will always be limited. The single god of the desert and the religions that worship him stand between us and those who put up altars and gave sacrifices and festivals in the name of Antigonus. (…) Our understanding of the nature of religious experience itself is so shaped by the nature of Judaeo-Christian experience that we have had great difficulty recognizing as at all religious any belief or practice that departs very far from our Judaeo-Christian norm."

[77] Of course, it does display idiosyncratic (though not entirely unique) traits. See: Parker 1996, 262, who, in the wake of Price 1984a, 38, himself calls the hymn "quite untypical" as opposed to different "non-competitive" associations between rulers and gods, which, different from the Ithyphallos, clearly reconfirm the powerful position of the normal gods: "Saviour kings could be assimilated to saviour gods precisely because saviour gods still had power."

[78] "I would hesitate to accept by taking wholly seriously the paean of Hermocles (….) At the right time and place, the Greek gods, unlike most others, could take a joke," so H. Lloyd-Jones, Psychoanalysis and the Study of the Ancient World, in: P. Horden (ed.), *Freud and the Humanities* (London 1985) 152–181, espec. 179 n. 62; H.-J. Gehrke, *Geschichte des Hellenismus* (Munich 1990) 191: "teilweise spielerisch, womöglich sogar ironisch;" Weber 1995, 305: "so konnte mann manche Passagen auch eher auf eine Ironisierung hin interpretieren" with arguments; Mikalson 1998, 96: "playfulness in the song," against the background of the contemporaneous sociopolitical ambience (85): "The playful spirit of this high society is apparent." For that matter, it is a typically modern error to think that religion and humor are incompatible in ancient culture. "Modern readers tend to regard religion as by definition un-funny,"

also belonged. All the same, it cannot be denied that from the early fourth century onwards, kings, tyrants and generals did receive cultic honours, including altars, sacrifices, cult hymns praising their superior power, and in later times also temples. We are still confronted with the question: what does this mean? Before we go into this let us first have one more look at the birth announcements of the new gods.

3. The Construction of a God

Two instruments are of seminal importance in the construction of a god: word and action, that is: language and performance. Viewed from the perspective of ritual, to which both belong, they may even be regarded as the sole viable instruments to that effect. For, indeed, "rituals often communicate things that it would be unwise or even ineffective to convey in any more direct fashion."[79] One may even conceive of a mental condition in which ritual is performed, a 'ritual stance' or 'commitment' that entails acceptance of meaning.[80]

1. *Language*

Qualifications such as ἰσόθεος (god-like), θεῖος (divine), θεός ὥς (as a god) prevailed throughout Greek literature from Homer onwards.[81] The fourth century, which witnessed a rapid increase in acclamations such as σωτήρ (saviour) and εὐεργέτης (benefactor), also displays a gradual shift in allusions to divine qualities in these praises. Take for instance the cheers addressed to the Spartan king Agesilaos in the beginning of that century: μετὰ θεοὺς σωτῆρα ("saviour next to" or "after the gods": Xen. *Ages*. 11.13). "Byzantinistic flattery" howl the sceptics, but that is demonstrably too one-sided. Obviously, grovelling may play a part in the proposal of a certain Demokles at the royal court of Syracuse to

---

thus J.A. North, *Roman Religion* (Oxford 2000) 81. Cf. P. Berger, *Redeeming Laughter* (Berlin-New York 1997). Hence the contemporary jokes and puns on ruler cult do nothing to disprove belief in the divinity of the rule in other social sectors.

[79] Kowalzig 2007, 46, in her discussion of the power of performance, to which we shall return later.

[80] Thus C. Humphrey & J. Laidlaw, *The Archetypal Actions of Ritual: A Theory of Ritual Illustrated by the Jain Rite of Worship* (Oxford 1994), as cited by Kowalzig 2007, 51 (cf. preceding note).

[81] See *e.g.* Nock 1928, 31, with the note, worthy of consideration, that these terms are "susceptible of different meanings to different people who used it."

dance henceforth in honour of the living Dionysios II and no longer for the lifeless nymphs: οὐ δεῖν προσέχειν ἀψύχοις θεοῖς ("one must not pay attention to soulless gods:" Athen. 6.250 A), a notion that returns in the hymn to Demetrios. On the other hand, flattery does not seem to have been a decisive or necessary factor in the foundation of a hero-cult in the centre of the agora for the tyrant Euphron of Sicyon *after his death* (Xen. *Hell.* 7.3.12.).[82]

In the same fourth century one can perceive a gradually swelling rumble in rhetorical and philosophical treatises. In a letter to king Philippos II of Macedonia Isokrates (*Epist.* 3.5) states that after his eventual victory over the Persians "there is nothing left for the king than to become god" (οὐδὲν γὰρ ἔσται λοιπὸν ἔτι πλὴν θεὸν γ ενέσθαι). Once more, scholars have denied this expression any trace of divinisation, this time on the ground that it is a gnomic expression

[82] This is the right moment to justify my silence on the possible relationship of hero-cult and ruler cult. It is one of those eternal indigestable bones of contention among specialists. According to one party, ruler cult cannot possibly be modelled after the cult of heroes on account of he restriction of the latter to the dead (Bickel, Taeger). Against this, others (v. Prott, Rohde, Kornemann, Kaerst and, most systematically, Habicht, followed by some of his reviewers mentioned in Habicht 1970, 243 n.1) hold that ruler cult can *only* have been moulded on hero cult on account of 1) its essentially local nature, comparable to the local city cult of the ruler, and 2) the specific motives for the cult: euergetism, city-founding. In Versnel 1974, 144–148, I have argued that if Plutarch *Dion* 46.1 refers to Dion's honours in Syracuse (357 BC) as divine (σωτῆρα καὶ θεὸν ἀποκαλούντων) and Diodorus 16.20.2 to the same honours as heroic (τιμὰς ἡρωικάς), it is not wise to single out one of the two as the sole and exclusive option in theoretical reflection. Both may have contributed to the creation of this new 'theology,' as Nilsson in his review of Habicht's book (*Gnomon* 29 [1957] 214 ff., espec. 215), already argued: "Der Kult der Heroen hat beigetragen zum Kult der Machthaber, aber dieser gründet sich nicht ausschließlich auf den Kult der Ktistai." Cf. *GGR* II, 135 f. E. Will, in his review of Habicht's book, aptly warned us not to start our theorizing from what *existed* but from what was aimed at: "la sacralisation des hommes providentiels". In the process of devising new symbolic forms for the so far non-existent new status of the sovereign king (μειζόνως ἢ κατ' ἄνθρωπον, Diod. 16.11.1) only two avenues were available: the heroic and the divine, and both have been fruitfully explored. Scholars seem to forget that in our evidence living rulers were practically without exception honoured with *divine* cults, including Olympian sacrifices (*thusiai*) (Lanciers 1993, 205 with n. 7) and predicates, including the predicate θεός (see the collection in Habicht 1970, 156 n. 75), not with heroic ones. For other types of superhuman humans this may be different. See especially: B. Currie, Euthymos of Locri: A Case Study on Heroization in the Classical Period, *JHS* 122 (2002) 24–44. Cf. on heroic honours for non-royal individuals: K. Buraselis, Political Gods and Heroes or the Hierarchisation of Political Divinity in the Hellenistic World, in A. Barzano *et alii* (edd.), *Modelli eroici dall'antichità alla cultura europea* (Rome 2003) 185–197. For a revealing example of manipulating the choice between god or hero see also below p. 494. Finally, I must point out that my subject is not origins but actual ritual, including non-city-centered forms of 'theopoetics'.

used exactly to warn the mortal that here has been reached a limiting boundary which he should *not* try to transgress, the barrier between mortal and god. It expresses the same as the Pindaric maxim quoted above: "do not aspire to become Zeus…mortals should behave as mortals."[83] What these sceptics fail to appreciate is that the ambiguity in the expression—which, from a purely linguistic point of view, may be a warning just as well as an exhortation—makes it perfectly liable to contextual engineering. In a period in which the first human beings are awarded divine honours, it is exactly the opposite meaning—semantically equally legitimate, but so far sleeping—that is now kissed awake. Experimenting with the gnomic, suggesting, not stipulating, that is one of the most enchanting—and rewarding—tasks of rhetoric. The same Isokrates in his praise of the city king Euagoras says that poets have exaggerated by saying about men of primeval times "that he is a god amidst men" (ὑπερβολαῖς κέχρηνται λέγοντες ὡς ἦν θεὸς ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἢ δαίμων θνητός),[84] nonetheless adding that "all this could most precisely be said about the nature of Euagoras" (ἅπαντα τὰ τοιαῦτα περὶ τὴν ἐκείνου φύσιν ῥηθῆναι μάλιστ' ἂν ἁρμόσειεν). Here we encounter similar and indeed interrelated experiments in semantic brinkmanship. They are only two out of a host of similar ones in fourth century rhetoric serving as linguistic instruments to pave the way towards the construction of a mortal god.

So far there is nothing shocking in this. A Dutch television reporter witnessing the superhuman supremacy of the Netherlands champion during the world skating championship of 1998, exclaimed: "and yet he is born from mortal parents. His parents were human beings!"[85]

---

[83] Gordon 1996, 7 speaks of "the boundary between the permissible and the impermissible" that consists in bestowing life on inanimate images as Daidalos did. Indeed, the resemblance is striking as are the ways to "gamble with the impermissible" as discussed *ibidem*. See below. p. 478.

[84] *Evag*. 72. The expression θεὸς ἐν ἀνθρώποις *vel sim*. was proverbial (Theogn. 339; Antiphanes, Meineke, *FCG* 3.121). Cf. Arist. *Pol.* 3. 1284a. 11, on a man of transcendent virtue in the state: εἰκὸς ὥσπερ θεὸν εἶναι ἐν ἀνθρώποις τὸν τοιοῦτον.

[85] I do not wish to accuse him of plagiarism when I note that the Hellenistic poet Rhianos (Stob. *Flor.* 4.34; Powell, *Collectanea Alexandrina* 9 f.) uses the very same expresssion when he reminds the all too fortunate, opulent, and hence haughty person (most probably referring to the Hellenistic divine ruler) "that his parents are mortals" (θνητοὶ δέ οἱ εἰσι τοκῆες). These days, in my country, outstanding athletes and above all soccer champs are often referred to as 'godenzonen' (sons of gods). Half a century ago Dodds 1951, 242, wrote: "That Hellenistic ruler-worship was *always* insincere (…..) no one, I think, will believe who has observed in our own day the steadily growing mass adulation of dictators, kings, and in default of either, athletes,"

The next Sunday Netherlands' most renowned reformed minister, also on TV, eagerly appropriated this exclamation for the instruction of his congregation. He explained that, just as the exclamation quoted might imply that the winning sportsman himself should be taken as being divine (though he is not), so Jesus' divinity was the result of a similar misinterpretation of rhetorical cheers and allusions. Indeed, in the domains of skating and that of theology things go very fast in my folkloristic little country. But the message is suggestive. Let us keep it in mind.

2. *Performance*

In Aesch. *Sup*. 980 ff. Danaos, who as a suppliant together with his daughters has found shelter in the city of Argos, says:

> Children, offer your prayers, with sacrifice and libation, to the citizens of Argos, as to Olympian gods. For they are our saviours without doubt (ὦ παῖδες, Ἀργείοισιν εὔχεσθαι χρεών, θύειν τε λείβειν θ', ὡς θεοῖς Ὀλυμπίοις, σπονδάς, ἐπεὶ σωτῆρες οὐ διχορρόπως).

We are still on the level of poetical rhetoric, which provides more expressions of this type.[86] What Danaos does is suggest, not perform. Even so, we do descry here a literary scenario of the actual performances that we observe in the fourth century.

When the tyrant Dion entered Syracuse in 357 BC, having revealed his plan to liberate the whole of Sicily, Plutarch *Dion* 29 describes his entry as follows:

> On either side of the street where he entered the Syracusans placed sacrificial offerings, and sacred tables and mixing bowls (κρατῆρες), and wherever he passed by the people would throw flowers (προχύται) to him and addressed him with prayers as to a god (καὶ προστρεπομένων ὥσπερ θεὸν κατευχαῖς).

---

adding in n. 34: "Hitler got nearer to being a god than any conqueror of the Christian period." In all these examples the modern 'consent-model' of ritual, including verbal ritual expression, as developed in 'performance theory' is of seminal importance (see below p. 472).

[86] For instance *Od*. 8.461 ff. Ph. Fredericksmeyer, On the Background of the Ruler Cult, in: *Ancient Macedonian Studies in Honor of Ch.E. Edson* (Thessaloniki 1981) 149, and Hammond 1999, 106, argue that this and other expressions especially with respect to pre-diadochic Macedonia prove that this does not imply divinisation: it is comparison, not equation. Though this is formally correct, they ignore the psychological seduction hidden in this terminology.

Why did they do this? Diodorus 16.11.1 gives the answer: because "everybody estimated his miraculous power as exceeding human measure" (τὴν ἀρετὴν τοῦ ἀνδρὸς πάντες ἀπεδέχοντο μειζόνως ἢ κατ' ἄνθρωπον). Note that the text does not say κράτος (political power) but ἀρετή, the word that we met earlier in the term aretalogy, which from the 4th century on is used to praise the superhuman feats of gods. And what was the nature of his superhuman blessings? Diodorus 16.20.6, on another occasion, tells us that the Syracusans

> honoured with praises by the whole citizen body (πάνδημοι) and magnificent receptions (ἀποδοχαί) their benefactor (εὐεργέτης) as the one who alone was the saviour of the fatherland (ὡς μόνον σωτῆρα γεγονότα τῆς πατρίδος),

while Plutarch *Dion* 46, in the same historical context, speaks of prayers (εὐχαί) and appeals/invocations (παρακλήσεις) in which the Syracusans called Dion saviour and god (σωτῆρα καὶ θεόν).

Here we have a fairly complete picture of the construction of a god: deification as an expression of praise, gratitude and the acknowledgment of achievements exceeding human measure. Indeed, here the gnomic expression "the only thing that remains is to become god" realizes its revolutionary novel implementation in a kind of theatrical play in word and action: the ruler is addressed as god in prayers and he is treated as a god with sacrifice.

This was not the first time Sicily witnessed such a thing: a century before this Empedokles, prophet and doctor, claimed that he was a god on earth,[87]

> An immortal god, mortal no more, I go about honoured by all, as is fitting (ἐγὼ δ' ὑμῖν θεὸς ἄμβροτος, οὐκέτι θνητὸς πωλεῦμαι μετὰ πᾶσι τετιμένος, ὥσπερ ἔοικα),[88] crowned with ribbons and fresh garlands; and by all whom I come upon as I enter their prosperous towns, by men and women, I am revered. They follow me in their thousands, asking where lies the road to profit, some desiring prophesies, while others ask to hear the word of healing for every kind of illness, long transfixed by harsh pains.

---

[87] Fr. 112, KRS Fr. 399, whose translation I have adopted.

[88] Jaap Mansfeld suggests to me that ὥσπερ ἔοικα should rather be understood in the sense of "according to the way I look like" (referring to what follows), and that this suits the theatrical interpretation that I shall propose below.

And in Fr. 146 = KRS 409, speaking of *daimones* who gradually will ascend through ever higher realms of creation (as he himself is doing) he writes:

> But at the end they come among men on earth as prophets, bards, doctors and princes (ἰητροὶ καὶ πρόμοι ἀνθρώποισι ἐπιχθονίοισι πέλονται); and thence they arise as gods highest in honour, sharing with the other immortals their hearth and their table, without part in human sorrows or weariness.

Other sources confirm that Empedokles was received in that quality with great pomp and reverence in Sicilian cities. Note how doctors—we are back at Menekrates—and kings or tyrants—Dionysios, Dion, Demetrios—are closely united in their deifications. This confirms that, though political and military salvation may be the most conspicuous *aretai*, they are not the only qualities that may open the gate to heaven. Note, too, how sharing the table and the dishes of the gods is one of the specific markers of *apotheosis*, a theme to which we shall have to return.

4. Did (the) Greeks believe in the Divinity of their Rulers?

When we now turn to the question announced in the title of this chapter, we should realize that this brings us dangerously close to a vexing and in my view sorely misguided recent campaign against the legitimacy of using the terms 'belief/believe' in the study of Greek religion. In Appendix IV I hope to demonstrate the absurdity of this modern doctrine. However, we need not wait for the result of that enquiry before tackling the question of the present section: belief in (the existence of) god or gods is not the same as believing that a human being (specifically a ruler) is (a) god. Many different avenues (and back alleys) have been taken to allay the threat hidden in this question. Earlier we have encountered a few arguments against the religious quality of ruler cult. Another, very popular, reaction is the appeal to scepticism, criticism or derision of ruler cult, to be found throughout antiquity,[89] including the earliest period of the deification of the ruler.

[89] K. Scott, Humor at the Expense of the Imperial Cult, *CPh* 27 (1932) 317–328; J. Tondriau, L'avis de Lucien sur la divinisation des humains, *Lettres d'Humanité* 7 (1948) 127–138, and in *MH* 5 (1948) 124–132; Habicht 1970, 213–221: 'Zeitgenossische Polemik gegen den Kult'; G. Bowersock, Greek Intellectuals and the Imperial

We have already met king Philippos' derisive reaction to Menekrates' pretensions, and the Athenians' reactions to that king's own deification at Kunosarges (above n.24). Democharesʼ list of the divine honours bestowed on Demetrios,[90] including a summary of the hymn, is from beginning to end interspersed with terms such as κολακεία (flattery). Plutarch, who in his *Life of Demetrius* 10–15 (probably influenced by Democharesʼ) also gives a collection of these privileges, introduces them as τιμαὶ ἀμετρίαι (excessive honours), one initiator outshining the other in his servility (ὑπερβαλλόμενος ἀνελευθερίᾳ), while also referring to contemporary reactions.[91] Various types of mishap were interpreted as tokens of divine displeasure with their new colleagues Demetrios and Antigonos: the sacred *peplos* (robe) displaying pictures of the gods, in which the images of Demetrios and Antigonos were to be woven, was ripped in two by a hurricane; all round the altar of the 'Saviours' hemlock sprouted; the procession of the Dionysia had to be cancelled on account of an unseasonable severe frost which destroyed both grape and corn.

I relate this so extensively because Plutarch *Demetr.* 12.4 (cf. 26.3) also quotes a fragment by the comedy writer Philippides,[92] in which he attacks Stratokles, the initiator of many of these divine honors:

> Through him (i.e. Stratokles) it was that hoar-frost blasted all the vines,
> Through his impiety (ἀσεβοῦντα) the robe was rent in twain,
> Because he gave the gods' own honours unto men.
> Such work destroys a people, not its comedy.

Cult in the Second Century AD, in: W. den Boer (ed.), *Le culte des souverains dans l'empire romain* (Entretiens Hardt 19, 1973) 179–206. Both sides in: Th. Paulsen, Verherrlichung und Verspottung. Die Gestalt des 'Gottmenschen' bei Philostrat und Lukian, in: G. Binder, B. Effe & R. Glei (edd.), *Gottmenschen. Konzepte existentieller Grenzüberschreitung im Altertum* (Trier 2003) 97–120.

[90] *FGrH* 75 no. 2 (Athen. 6.62.253B–D). Cf. Habicht 1970, 214 ff., also referring to the important 'demythification' of Plutarch's targets by L. Robert, *Hellenica* 2 (1946) 28 ff.

[91] Weber 1995, 301 notes that Demetrios was easily the most controversial person in this regard, due to the conjunction of his extravagant behaviour and the place where it was staged: Athens. At pp. 301–305 he gives a survey of reactions in contemporaneous literature.

[92] *CAF* III p. 308 = *PCG* VII p. 347 There is a good discussion of this and other fragments of Philippides relevant to Demetrios by: G.B. Phillip, Philippides, ein politischer Komiker in hellenistischer Zeit, *Gymnasium* 80 (1973) 493–509, espec. 505 ff. He convincingly opts for a date around 301 BC.

(τὰς τῶν θεῶν τιμὰς ποιοῦντ' ἀνθρωπίνας.
ταῦτα καταλύει δῆμον,[93] οὐ κωμῳδία)

Obviously, these reactions—including one by king Antigonos deriding his own divinity by remarking "the man who empties my chamber pot has not noticed it" (Plut. *Is. et Os.* 24, *Mor.* 360CD)—breathe an intellectual atmosphere. As such, however, they are scarce and offer no more proof of a general rejection or disbelief, than do philosophical (Xenophanes, Epicurus), literary (Euripides), comical (Aristophanes) passages with gods as objects of criticism and laughing-stocks, as we have them also in 'Götterburlesken' in all types of literature from Homer onward.

Consequently, scholars do not stop mulling over the grade of mental authenticity in the reception of ruler cult, since, they argue, our evidence simply does not leave us a choice. Why should Greek authors—comedy writers and others—try to deride or otherwise undermine the various contemporary deificatory strategies by exposing the overtly mortal aspects of the new gods, if they did not detect or assume an element of belief in those who endorsed them? And, for that matter, we have seen that it was not always the ruler or his courtiers who initiated the process of deification (as modern scholars are increasingly ready to admit).

If, then, there still is a justification for the question 'did the, or most, or some Greeks believe in the divinity of their ruler' or more directly 'did they believe that their ruler was (a) god', we must now first briefly propound three preliminary considerations.

First, there is the eminently polythetic nature of the notion *theos*. Amazingly, not one of all those we have seen squabbling about the problems around the equation of Greek *nomizein* and English 'believe' has brought to notice that exactly the same is true for the question: "does Greek *theos* equal English 'god'?" In the background there may have been the fear that this would have complicated matters to an unmanageable degree. Nor, for that matter, is it possible to start a discussion of this issue here, on which there is amazingly little serious

[93] As καταλύσαντες τὸν δῆμον (demolishing democracy) the opponents of Demetrios' 'democracy' had been banned in 307 BC. The expression is formulaic for anti-democratic threat: Versnel 1990, 56 f. n. 52.

literature to begin with.[94] For the moment let it suffice to refer to—perhaps the best—very brief discussion by Simon Price 1984, 79 ff., in particular his emphasis on the predicative use of the word as in the sentence "this is (a) theos." Things, experiences, events, *and* human beings can all be predicated as being *theos*. Here indeed a wide range of possible interpretations reveals itself. Calling someone *theos* in fourth century rhetoric of praise, as we saw, need not have exceeded the level of the simile. But we have also observed that with the *performative* elaborations of this language of praise a potential crossing of borderlines came into view. Price's quotation of Carneades' well-known arguments about gods in Cicero *ND* 3.43 is of great consequence for the next step in our own enquiry:

> If gods exist, are the nymphs also goddesses? If the nymphs, are the Pans and the Satyrs also gods? But they are not gods; therefore the nymphs also are not gods. Yet they possess temples vowed and dedicated to them by the nations. Therefore the other gods who have had temples dedicated to them are not gods either.

Price comments: "Of course, Carneades with this little by little approach had a different agenda, nor is it an essential issue whether his argument is decisive." Let this suffice as a good illustration that there were no uncontroversial criteria for the predication of *theos*. The boundaries of the concept were not unequivocally defined. And we have come to the centre of things with his conclusion: "there are unproblematic uses of the concept (e.g. Zeus) but at the edges problems arose. Were the nymphs, or satyrs, or emperors *theoi*? Was its predication of the emperor aberrant in comparison to its predication of the traditional gods?" Indeed, if the shared attribution of temples (and altars, sacrifices, and hymns) to nymphs, Pan, Satyrs *and* gods can be used as proof that *none* of them are gods, then, contrarily, they may also serve to confirm that *all of them* are gods, an interpretation that also may extend to human beings addressed and treated as gods. And it is this potential for ambivalence—the same as what we earlier discovered

[94] Price 1984, 79: "Theos, though a basic term of Greek religion, has never been given a detailed semantic study", mentioning two exceptions: W. Pötscher, *Theos. Studien zur älteren griechischen Gottesvorstellung* (Diss. Wien 1953); W. Burkert, *Griech. Rel.* 406–8 (= Burkert 1985, 271 f.). The situation has not changed dramatically since. With the exception of Burkert's contribution on the origin of the concept *theos*, A.B. Lloyd (ed.), *What is a God? Studies in the Nature of Greek Divinity* (London 1997) does not help much.

in the expression "there is nothing left for the king than to become god"—that we must examine a bit further.

Secondly, we should be aware that belief in the gods and belief in the divinity of the ruler, being both treated to the same cultic rituals, are more or less in the same boat, at least in one respect.[95] In attributing divine predicates and cultic privileges to a mortal ruler, and thus 'making him *theos*', people were focussing on a selection of predicates, with no necessary urge to complete the whole gamut of divine qualities usually attributed to gods. Qualities such as (im)mortality, changing positions in (in)visibility, and various forms of miraculous behaviour simply remained out of scope, just as we have observed them doing in the communication with 'real' gods when a context required it.

In this respect we should heed the risk that my compatriot Ruurd Nauta, writing on panegyrical poetry, coined 'the danger of totalizing comparisons'.[96] He introduced the term in order to expose the type of overinterpretation that finds hidden meanings (and irony) at random in poetic texts. The central question concerns the uncertainty about how far the *tertium comparationis*, the common ground of the comparison, extends. The danger lies in the technique of arbitrarily extending the instances of the *tertium comparationis* beyond the one that was obviously and unequivocally intended by the author. This method, for anyone who is on the lookout for it, will *always* produce irony. Nauta concludes (2002, 426):

> A poet must have been able to trust his audience that it would not add extraneous elements to the *tertium comparationis*. To put this in more general terms: panegyric is only possible on the basis of a contract between the poet and his audience which defines the context (….). The words themselves cannot put an end to the attribution of meaning: only the situation in which the words are uttered can.

In the last phrase, as so often earlier in the present book, the fundamental import of context once more comes to the fore. A sample of it can already be found in our discussion of the various divine associations in the Demetrios hymn. As a whole the passage just quoted is a perfect expression of what I will argue concerning the special nature

---

[95] For a subtle treatment of relevant inconsistencies in Kallimachos' works see Bulloch *o.c.* (above n. 36).

[96] In his dissertation *Poetry for Patrons: Literary Communication in the Age of Domitian* (Leiden 1995) and in a revised form in his book under the same title (Leiden 2002).

of the divinity of the ruler.[97] The viability of a selective exclusion of unwelcome qualities is due to man's ability to mean what he says and does during ritual (e.g. around the festive entrance of a king) without feeling the need to reconcile these statements with the rest of his experience. And herewith we arrive at our third consideration.

Thirdly, then, and finally, we should call to mind the words of King 2003, 277 about the Romans (which just as well holds for the Greeks) that "they possessed specific alternative mechanisms for the organization of beliefs that allowed clusters of variant beliefs to exist within Roman [Greek] society without conflict." It may very well be that *if* we find hints of belief in the divinity of the ruler, the 'mechanisms' of it may vary from the ones involved in the belief in the existence of gods and yet no less deserve the denominator 'belief'. Or in the words of William James 1890, 290:

> The whole distinction of real and unreal, the whole psychology of belief, disbelief, and doubt, is thus grounded on mental facts—first, that we are liable to think differently of the same; and second, that when we have done so, we can choose which way of thinking to adhere to and which to disregard.

5. Ritual Play: Sincere Hypocrisy

What kind of belief are we talking about: belief or make-believe? It is time to devote a few words to the concept of the ludic. According to the Dutch poet and novelist Frans Kellendonk, religious belief should be basically defined as a form of 'oprecht veinzen', i.e. 'honest dissembling/simulating' or 'sincere pretence'. Hence he ranges it among the devices of irony: people feign to know what they are talking about though at the same time being aware—consciously or unconsciously—that this is not a reality that can be proven or touched: in religion people live by images, images constructed by their own imagination.[98]

---

[97] Cf. S. Goldhill, *The Poet's Voice. Essays on Poetics and Greek Literature* (Cambridge 1991) 271–283, espec. 279, on "the need for selective, controlled reading of an encomium—a reader's necessary participation in the social performance of encomium."

[98] The relevant sections of his work plus some reactions and comments by critics are collected in: Ch. de Cloet e.a. (edd.), *Oprecht veinzen: over Frans Kellendonk* ('s Gravenhage 1998). Several critics disagree with his position. I am not arguing that every type of 'belief' satisfies this specific definition, but I do feel that it perfectly covers the theatrical type of belief under discussion here. For that matter, Kellendonk may have invented the terminology but not the concept: it already claims a central place in

The anthropologist Nigel Barley was once watching a religious ceremony in Central Africa. He had an informant, who described to him what was going on. "The man in the feather headdress is now taking the sacred objects out of their hut." "But I don't *see* a man in a feather headdress," replied the anthropologist. "No, he is not wearing it," answered his informant. I owe this little anecdote to Richard Gordon, who cited it in a paper given at Leiden some years ago, with the inference that

> religion, in other words, is in the mind. It consists not so much in religious acts as in schemes of perceptions and thoughts whose meaningfulness is repeatedly reinforced by the performance of symbolic acts.

And after adding a well-known instance from Roman religious ritual,[99] he concluded:

> So many pious fictions, so much honest pretence. And hardly anyone, outside the ranks of the philosophers, cared about the truth.

Belief as sincere dissembling, religion as honest pretence—in the specific context where our topic brought us, an alternative, even more apposite, expression prompts itself, namely 'honest hypocrisy'. The Greek word ὑκοκριτής means both actor—one who plays a part on the stage—and dissembler, pretender, hypocrite. And it is in the world of theatrical performance that we have obviously landed. Ritual, at least the type of ritual that we are concerned with, is a form of make believe, of theatre, of play.[100] This means that while performing or attending ritual—and it should be noted that in ritual, however 'spectacular' it may be, the participants are actors at least as much as they are spectators—one has two options: either to fully (and sincerely)

Kierkegaard's notion of irony, the notion for which Kellendonk's 'sincere pretence' is an alternative. On the limits of equating 'make-believe' and 'pretence' in writing and reading fiction see: G. Currie, *The Nature of Fiction* (Cambridge 1990) 50 f.

[99] *POxy* 3781 reports that when Hadrian succeeded to the throne in 117 AD, on the death of Trajan, a public performance was held, apparently in Egypt, in which an actor, playing the part of the god Apollo, came forward to declare that he had just escorted Trajan to heaven in a chariot drawn by white horses, and had now come to announce the new emperor's accession to the people. Others tell us that an eagle was released from the top of an emperor's funeral-pyre as the flames consumed the body below: "the bird is supposed by the Romans to bear the emperor's soul from earth to heaven" (Herodian 4.2.11).

[100] Performance is the *sine qua non* of ritual, according to R. Rappaport, *Ecology, Meaning, and Religion* (Berkeley 1979) 176 f., and see Kowalzig 2007, 46 n. 107 for literature on the performative nature of ritual, which is in the centre of recent interest.

pretend or to break the rules of the game.[101] The first option entails the condition that the spectator is willing to accept emotional involvement in the spectacle. He should 'surrender' to the 'reality' of fiction. This means that he must abandon the attitude of the 'onlooker' and adopt the one of the 'theatregoer.'[102]

Recognition of the theatrical and performative nature of ritual provides us with a variety of avenues towards assessing the acceptance of ruler cult. One of them relates to the inherent 'power' of ritual. It has been long observed that ritual *coerces* its participants into a position of acceptance. This aspect of ritual has been elaborated on in modern 'performance theory' and particularly in the ritual adaptation as proposed by Bloch 1989, who denies ritual any propositional force (see below p. 490 f.). The inference he draws from this is the following:

> Because participants do not challenge the routine formulae or conventions, formalization is thus very effective in promoting a loose compliance with the social roles depicted in the ritual: acceptance of the mode of presentation coincides with acquiescence in the content.

As regards "the routine formulae and conventions" we must realize that all ritual building stones in the creation of ruler cult are adopted from existing forms of divine cult; hence they are, in this sense, traditional. The revolutionary novelty was not their forms but their transference onto the cult of the ruler. The latter aspect concurs with the element of dynamics, mentioned as a *desideratum* by Kowalzig:[103]

> While the Blochian model is itself rather static, it can produce a fruitful dynamic among participants in ritual who constantly move between resistance and consent. Compliance and defiance, so it is argued more recently, determine both ritual's efficacy and its limitations.

The second access to an understanding of the public reception of ruler cult, while also clarifying the prevalence of 'compliance' over 'defiance' beyond the issues of 'coercion' and 'consent-model'—is to continue

---

[101] Cf. Pruyser 1968, 190: "Playing creates a new order which is within its space and time absolute: deviations from the rules break the spell and ruin the game. They terminate all play…"

[102] These terms and concepts are introduced by E. Goffman, *An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Cambridge 1974). E. Hall, Towards a Theory of Performance Reception, in: E. Hall & St. Harrop (edd.), *Theorizing Performance: Greek Drama, Cultural History, and Critical Practice* (London 2010) presents important insights in this and related aspects of theatrical performance.

[103] Kowalzig 2007, in her section on the power of ritual (43–55), whose discussion I have followed in this passage.

our analysis of the mechanisms at work in man's commitment to theatrical ritual or different types of encounters with the fictional. That is what we now set out to do.

Ancient authors occasionally show an awareness of the fictionality of ritual. *Sciendum sacris simulata pro veris accipi* ("You must keep in mind that what is simulated in sacred rituals is accepted as true") wrote Servius.[104] It will be hard to find a more poignant expression, ancient or modern, of this 'hypocritical belief' and its concomitant ritual behaviour than the curiously 'modern' admonition ascribed to Philemon,[105] a writer of New Comedy and a contemporary of Demetrios Poliorketes:

> θεὸν νόμιζε καὶ σέβου, ζήτει δὲ μή·
> πλεῖον γὰρ οὐδὲν ἄλλο τοῦ ζητεῖν ἔχεις.
> εἴτ' ἔστιν εἴτ' οὐκ ἔστι μὴ βούλου μαθεῖν,
> ὡς ὄντα τοῦτον καὶ παρόντ' ἀεὶ σέβου.
>
> Believe in god and worship him, but seek him not:
> you'll have no other profit than the search.
> Don't try to find out if he *is* or not,
> but worship him *as if* he *is*....*and* present!

This little poem is focussed on the question of religious belief, not concerning divine rulers but with regard to gods. However, it beautifully shows that the inherent problems and their solutions are nearly identical for the two categories: regardless of whether the doubts regard the existence of gods or the divinity of rulers, stop wasting your time with worrying and thinking. *Do as if* by just performing the proper rituals.

The concept of 'the ludic' is of central interest in current anthropological and religious studies.[106] Following recent theory,[107] I adopt

---

[104] *ad* Verg. *Aen*. 2.116. I owe this reference to Lily Knibbeler.

[105] Thus Kock, *CAF* 2, no.118 a b (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.1.5 a b). Kassel-Austin, *PCG* VII p. 317 do not accept Philemon as the author. For some closely related assertions see below, the Epilogue of this book n.7.

[106] Of course, in the first place the works of Victor Turner should be mentioned. First signs of his interest in play, the ludic, already in *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-structure* (Harmondsworth 1974); ever more increasing and—particularly important for the issue under discussion—more and more focussed on theatrical aspects in: *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors. Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca and London 1974); *From Ritual to Theatre. The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York 1982); *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York 1988). But also in other disciplines the interest in play grew, as for instance in the psychological approach of D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London 1971).

[107] I am indebted to André Droogers for drawing my attention to this new centre of interest with his contribution to a conference on Turner: 'Turner, spel, en de

the definition of the ludic as the capacity to deal simultaneously and subjunctively with two or more ways of classifying reality. With regard to the term 'subjunctive' I here follow Victor Turner who distinguishes between the 'indicative mood', the domain of the 'as *is*', and "the subjunctive mood…used to express supposition, desire, hypothesis, or possibility," the domain of the 'as *if*.'[108]

Simultaneity is the other defining term. This concerns the 'double awareness' of the player.[109] After Huizinga with his *Homo Ludens* had contributed a revolutionary new insight into the nature of the ludic and especially into the seriousness of play,[110] recent theory has put ever more emphasis on the simultaneity of seriousness *and* play. This implies that the ludic is not an extra, but part and parcel of human reality. The compartmentalization and pluralism that are characteristic of modern society—in other words: our modern separative cosmology—has made us blind to that characteristic. In Victor Turner's terms: the 'indicative mood' has overcome the 'subjunctive mood'.[111] The ludic has been exiled to its own sphere. Modern society has thereby lost sight of play's real nature and it must be said that postmodernism has partly recovered this perspective. As Droogers, to whom I am much indebted for these insights, writes in conclusion (p. 53):

> The ludic capacity implies a double view of reality, it combines perspectives. One application of the ludic capacity is therefore the art of handling contradictions, dichotomies and paradoxes. In scientific methodological terms, the ludic represents an eclectic, poly-paradigmatic way of looking at reality.

I could have used this concept of simultaneity as a motto for all the earlier chapters, where I referred to notions of double awareness with terms such as multiperspectiveness, luxurious multiplicity, asyndetic parataxis, complementarity, double track procedure. Nowhere, however, is the concept more productive than in our present issue, which

---

verklaring van religie', published in *Anthropologische Verkenningen* 13 (1994) 31–45, revised and translated as 'Methodological Ludism: Beyond Religionism and Reductionism', in: A. van Harskamp (ed.), *Conflicts in Social Science* (London-New York 1996) 44–67. In my text I borrow both his definition, its foundations and parts of his phrasing.

[108] Turner 1988, 25; 169.

[109] As suggested by Pruyser 1968, 190.

[110] Cf. Pruyser 1968, 189: "The opposition between play and seriousness is only partially true, for playing has a seriousness all its own."

[111] Turner 1988, 101.

simply *is* about the 'honest hypocrisy' as embodied in serious role-playing—both on the part of the actor and on that of the co-acting spectators. Perhaps the reader recalls an earlier admonition to keep in mind the little Greek word ὡς, 'as if', being one of the most productive tools in the creation of religious imagery. Well here it *is* back.[112]

Playing (*the*) god (as Dion, Dionysios and Demetrios did, followed by a long series of rulers, tyrants, kings and emperors) and playing *a* god (as Menekrates, Alexarchos and Klearchos did), also, albeit less frequently, imitated in later times, despite all their differences share at least one thing: the element of performance, role-playing, including the need for dressing up. Some of these early divine *protagonistai* are recorded as having worn cothurni and other theatrical attire. In other words, also in the literal sense of the word they *played* the god. Demetrios Poliorketes was notorious for his extravagant array of cloaks and head gear, his purple robes and gold embroidered shoes,[113] and otherwise theatrical demeanour.[114] No doubt one of the incentives for this behaviour was the all-pervasive impact of theatrical performances on the mentality of contemporary people in the Hellenistic period.[115] A century before this, Thucydides 3.38.4 already noted that in Athens public life increasingly resembled a spectacle,[116] and it has long been

---

[112] For instances of rulers honoured ὡς or ὥσπερ followed by a choice of predicates like *soter, euergetes, ktistes, theos* etc. see: Habicht 1970, 169 n.14; 172 and *passim*. Most explicit we find it in the little poem by Philemon just quoted (p. 473).

[113] Espec. Plut. *Demetr.* 41.6 ff.; 42, 44.8.

[114] Plut. *Demetr.* 18.5 explicitly describes his attitude as that of a tragic actor, in pace, gestures, voicing, while adding at 41.6 the comparison: ὡς ἀληθῶς τραγῳδία μεγάλη. "Auch hier nähert sich sein Gehabe immer mehr dem eines sich selbst inszenierenden tragischen Schauspielers" (Weber 1995, 300). See the full discussion by A. Mastrocinque, Demetrios Tragodoumenos (Propaganda e letteratura al tempo di Demetrio Poliorcete), *Athenaeum* 67 (1979) 260–276. Cf. Thonemann 2005, 66 on Demetrios as "tragic hero and an actor in a drama," and 74 ff. on his role in the Dionysia.

[115] See the fundamental article by Chaniotis 1997a, from which I borrowed various references and quotations. In the Hellenistic period we also descry a remarkable increase in emphasis on the scenic staging of public ritual, especially the processions, a fixed element in ruler worship: A. Chaniotis, Sich selbst feiern? Die städtischen Feste des Hellenismus im Spannungsfeld zwischen Religion und Politik, in: P. Zanker & M. Wörrle (edd.), *Stadtbild und Bürgerbild im Hellenismus* (München 1995) 147–172; *idem*, Theatre Rituals, in: P. Wilson (ed.), *The Greek Theatre and Festivals: Documentary Studies* (Oxford 2007) 48–66, on religious and secular rituals performed in the theatre. Cf. J. Köhler, Pompai. *Untersuchungen zur Hellenistischen Kultur* (Frankfurt 1996); Chaniotis 2003b, *passim*.

[116] On theatricality in 5th century Athenian politics and society see the literature in Chaniotis 1997a, 220 n. 10. In her paper 'Aristophanes: The Performance of Utopia in the *Ecclesiazousae*' in: Goldhill & Osborne 1999, 167–179, F. Zeitlin treats this

observed that a 'theatrical mentality' characterized many aspects of Hellenistic life,[117] not least the royal court.[118] Plutarch *Demetr*. 18 notes that Demetrios changed his behaviour as soon as he had received the diadem and makes the explicit comparison with tragic actors "who adapt to their costumes their gait, voice, posture at table, and manner of addressing others."[119]

Once more: *did* (the) Greeks believe that (some of) their rulers were divine? One problem in such a question, of course, lies in the word 'the.' The man who emptied the chamber pot of king Antigonos' (above p. 464) probably did not, at least not during these very 'indicative' activities. Nor did the poet Philippides or other critics belonging to the intelligentsia. However, not for the first time we are confronted with another question, namely that of whose viewpoint we are interested in: is it only that of the intellectual elite? What, then, about the masses? Are they less interesting then the few whose literary products have come down to us?

The second, even more burning problem as we have seen, lies in the notion 'believe'. After our exploration of the ludic aspects of 'believe' we may now rephrase our earlier findings as follows. If we let ourselves be harangued by the Heidelberger Catechismus and modern logic—that ill-fated alliance that has done so much to destroy our ability to understand religious expression in its historical and cultural perspectives—then (the) Greeks did *not* believe in the divinity of their human gods, if only for the reason that they did not try to *mate* with real

---

Aristophanic comedy as an exemplary proof of the "theatricalization of civic experience in a variety of institutional contexts and discursive practices." Various contributions to Dobrov 1997 analyse the interplay between comedy and the socio-political reality of fourth century Athens.

[117] J.J. Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age* (Cambridge 1986) 4: "In the Hellenistic period one gets the impression that life was sometimes seen as a reflection of the theatre." Chaniotis 1997a, espec. 249, who quotes this, argues that it was not only 'seen' as theatrical, and that it was not "an invention or a stylistic feature of contemporary literature," but that inversely political life and the public appearances of kings in particular took an increasingly theatrical expression.

[118] On the royal court as the stage of theatrical performance see: H. von Hesberg, 'The King on Stage,' in: B. Bergmann & C. Kondoleon (edd.), *The Art of Ancient Spectacle* (Washington 1999) 65–75; Strootman 2007, 260 f.

[119] On Demetrios' theatrical behaviour see: Chaniotis 1997a, 244 f., referring to A. Wallace-Hadrill, Civilis Princeps: Between Citizen and King, *JRS* 72 (1982) 32–48, espec. 33 f.; J.J. Pollitt, *o.c.* (above n. 117) 6 f.; H. von Hesberg, Temporäre Bilder oder die Grenze der Kunst. Zur Legitimation frühhellenistischer Königsherrschaft im Fest, *JdI* 104 (1989) 61–82, espec. 77.

gods.[120] However, if we take the word "believe" in the sense of 'honest hypocrisy' as is required from an audience during a theatrical play,[121] the answer will probably be different and certainly less apodictic. The Greek spectators of—and *hypokritai* in—this 'divine comedy' may well have reacted like any theatre audience by temporarily 'believing' what happens on the stage (= honestly pretending that what they saw and heard is true) and resisting the temptation to look behind the theatrical masks or behind the scenes. The well-known portrayal of the audience's attitude during a stage-play as 'willing suspension of disbelief' is an ideal summary of my argument. Or to quote an illuminating passage from Pruyser 1968, 190, who introduced notions such as 'double awareness', 'duplicity of experience', and 'playful "as if" character' in the study of ritual:

> The player has a double awareness: he knows that there is a world "outside" the play circle with whose mores he must be in tune in order to survive, and he knows that there is another world inside the circle to which he must be fair as long as the play lasts. While being seriously and perhaps even strenuously involved in playing the game, giving it all he has in skill, speed, strength, or cunning, he also knows that "it is only play" and he can "step out of it." While entering into and getting out of the play are voluntary, being in it is a great compulsion. This double awareness of the player can become so acute that he may find himself playing the game in all seriousness while also knowing that it is not real.

Both ritual and theatrical play carry strong fictional aspects. The consequences in terms of credibility are comparable. T.S. Coleridge, who coined the expression 'willing suspension of disbelief' in his *Biographia literaria* ch. 14, applied it to 'poetic faith', referring to the willingness of a reader or viewer to accept the premises of a work of fiction, even if they are fantastic or impossible. We are back in the field of fiction, literary fiction this time. Besides the demand of involvement and 'surrender' required from any type of audience, narrative fictions require from the reader[122] that he treats the story as true. This implies

[120] If this disrespectful pun on mating parakeets (above p. 458) will be forgiven. Note, however, that Demetrios and other kings did not shrink from courting goddesses (above n. 58).

[121] Note that ancient authors regarded illusion and deception as the essential effect of theatrical acting: Chaniotis 1997a, n. 18, gives the evidence.

[122] That is from those readers whom P. Rabinowitz, *Before Reading: Narrative Conventions and the Politics of Interpretation* (Ithaca 1987) ranges among the category of

an appeal to his generosity: the reader is expected not to 'see' obvious inconsistencies. Many are the strategies, launched by both author and audience, in order *not* to notice implausibilities, intrinsic contradictions and mere impossibilities. Authors may put elements of their stories in the limelight in order to ensure that inconspicuous irregularities can slip past. In tragedy the technique of ἔκπληξις (consternation) is effective: "The more involved the audience, the less scrupulous its members will be," thus Ruth Scodel, to whose discussion of these conventions and strategies I refer the reader, and elsewhere "A generous audience may choose to treat an error of fact as a property of the fictional world."[123] More generally, "the audience is willing to accept a good deal and to supply a good deal."[124] All this is equally true for the divine ruler in his theatrical role and it radically changes the frame of interpretation of the notion 'belief' in the context of ruler cult.

Finally, a related analogy presents itself in another world of imagery and invites us to once more rephrase in different terms our initial findings concerning 'belief'. Gordon 1979 discusses the representation of both god and man as living beings in 'Daedalic' plastic art in such a way that the result imitates life to the extent of becoming deceptively real, without however ever being *really* real.[125] In this context he speaks of strategies of 'illusion.' Our present issue is the representation of a

---

the 'narrative audience' as opposed to the readers belonging to the 'authorial audience', who in Rabinowitz's construction posit themselves on the level of the author and, though seeking to appreciate the literary work, do not (fully) comply with the requirement of belief.

[123] R. Scodel, *Credible Impossibilities. Conventions and Strategies of Verisimilitude in Homer and Greek Tragedy* (Stuttgart-Leipzig 1999), 16 and 18 respectively. At p. 122 f., she refers to this strategy as 'Homeric rule of inattention'. The use of ἔκπληξις to conceal inconsistencies comes close to Longinus' view of the essence of rhetoric, namely to make us "seize upon the stronger element, so that we are attracted away from the demonstration of fact to the startling image, and the argument lies below the surface of the accompanying brilliance," as translated and commented upon by Kirwan 1990, 128 f.

[124] P.E. Easterling, Presentation of Character in Aeschylus, *G&R* 20 (1973) 5, speaking of tragic drama.

[125] In the Egyptian royal titulature the king may be called 'living image of Zeus' (εἰκὼν ζῶσα τοῦ Διός). "The metaphor uses the vehicle of the stamped resemblance on a coin or the likeness of a statue; it presupposes the use of images to portray the deity, but by the addition of 'living' applies this to the person of the king himself. His life becomes the image of the deity" (S.R. Llewelyn, The king as 'Living Image' of Zeus, *NDIEC* 9 [2002] 36 ff.). S. Iles Johnston, Animating Statues: A Case Study in Ritual, *Arethusa* 41 (2008) 445–478, points out that the ritual act of bestowing life upon a statue in Graeco-Roman religion is not attested before late Antiquity, especially in theurgy.

man as a god in language and performance, in panegyrics and cult, *and in plastic art*, in such a way that the mortal imitates god to the extent of becoming deceptively divine, without however ever becoming 'every inch' a god.

Asked if the statue *is* a living being the spectator might answer: in some respects yes, in others not: we do not *observe* the statue walking, eating, speaking, breathing, except for instance in our dreams. But as long as we are admiring this Daedalic work of art, we do not wish to renounce our illusion. Asked if Demetrios is a god, the spectator's answer might be: in some respects he is, in others not. 'Not every inch', for instance, since gods are larger than life-size. Demetrios cannot make himself invisible, nor does he fancy *knise* nor do we expect him to live eternally. But the spectators do not wish to give up their illusion during the momentary experience of his superhuman presence. We are speaking here of what Leiden art historians have recently coined "living presence response": spectators react to works of art as if they are living beings or even persons that act upon the reviewer, enter into a personal relationship with them, and elicit love, hate, desire or fear.[126]

In short, there and here, in the words of Gordon "the whole inventory is never present" and it is all a matter of "dicing with the impermissible." The concept 'illusion' expresses exactly what I have tried to argue so far: it holds the element of 'playing', of the fictional, and of (self)deception, in our case: the wilful suspension of disbelief, which is nothing else than a (wilful and temporary) shift in definitions or a blurring of classifications or a moving over to a different variant of belief. It also should remind us that the element of theatricality is not restricted to the rituals around a present ruler but also plays a major part in the worship of his 'presence' in a statuesque form.

In order to clarify the concept of henotheism in Chapter III, I quoted Seneca who says: "The God's splendour dazzles them so that they cannot see anything else, and keep their eyes fixed on himself." What I did not mention at that time, in order not to complicate matters, I dare say now: the god mentioned was not a god in the normal sense of that word but the emperor Claudius, who, however, during that 'dazzling'

[126] G.L. Hersey, *Falling in Love with Statues: Artificial Humans from Pygmalion to the Present* (Chicago/London 2009). The new theorists derive their inspiration from anthropologists like A. Gell, *Art and Agency* (Oxford 1997).

period *was* a god. You need only keep your eyes fixed on him and not glance aside.[127] With a variation on Usener's conception of 'Augenblicksgötter'[128] I would propose to speak here of 'Augenblicksglauben'.[129] The question that prompts itself next, whether belief can *ever* be more than 'belief of the moment,' is worth considering but will not be dealt with by the present writer in the present book.

6. Birds into Gods: Comic Theopoetics

Men into gods. So far so good. Let us now make a quick excursion to a late 5th-century Greek literary text, which will provide a revealing illumination of my central argument. In the *Birds* of Aristophanes two elderly Athenians, Peisetairos and his friend Euelpides, set out to find a city where they can henceforth live in peace. When they cannot find such a city they urge the birds to found one. They suggest building a city located between the earthly abode of men and the heavenly abode of the Olympian gods and from that vantage point taking over the sovereign position of the gods. This will turn out to be the opening to another – satirically explicit—construction of new gods displaying precise and revealing—but so far largely unnoticed[130]—analogies with what we have seen of the construction of deified rulers or doctors (at the expense of the Olympians).[131]

---

[127] Cf. the remark of Longinus quoted above n. 123.

[128] On the reception of this concept: A. van der Leeuw, Augenblicksgötter, *RAC* 1 (1950) 969–972.

[129] Note that the complete expression coined by Coleridge quoted above is: "that willing supension of disbelief *for the moment*." Discussing the divinity of the ruler, Kolde 2003, 369, speaks of his "nature en quelque sorte passagièrement divine."

[130] Following a brief suggestion by O. Weinreich, Antikes Gottmenschentum, *Neue Jahrbücher f. Wissenschaft und Jugendbildung* 2 (1926) 640 ff., Kleinknecht 1937, 54 n. 5, comments on the final scene of the *Birds* with the hymn for the new ruler Peisetairos (see below): "Als bis in alle Einzelzüge durchgeführte Parodie der herrscherlichen Epiphanie und Apotheose, die sich ganz in den rituellen Formen und Begriffen vollzieht, die wir aus dem Hellenismus kennen, sei die interessante Schlußszene der Vögel (1706 ff.) hier wenigstens erwähnt." He provides a full treatment of (and restricted to) this 'Parodie einer Herrscherapotheose', in: Zur Parodie des Gottmenschentums bei Aristophanes, *ARW* 34 (1937) 294–313, espec. 294–306. Horn 1970 only briefly refers to this treatment.

[131] Of course, the highly irreverent scepticism in the *Birds*, going well beyond that of any other extant comedy, has often been noticed. Its most notorious expression in the threat of starvation of the gods due to human refusal to sacrifice, also figuring in the Homeric Demeter hymn and in the Hesiodic Prometheus myth, has Near Eastern roots: Auffarth 1994a, with a bibliographic survey at p. 66 n.24. The overall 'blasphe-

First, the heavenly city receives a name: Νεφελοκοκκυγία 'Cloud cuckoo city'. Then there is an interesting development of events. Initially, the birds only take over the power and sovereignty from the gods. This, however, appears to automatically entail their divinisation, which had not been an issue prior to lines 562 f., where a herald announces the humans "that, the birds being sovereign, they must henceforth sacrifice to the birds and only afterwards to the gods" (ὡς ὀρνίθων βασιλεύοντων θύειν ὄρνισι τὸ λοιπόν, κἄπειτα θεοῖς ὕστερον αὖθις). However, the offerings to the birds need only consist of grain, wheat, bread and an occasional roasted gnat. Then the birds, a bit worried, ask (571 f.): "but how are humans supposed to *believe* us to be gods,[132] and not jackdaws? We fly around and wear wings" (καὶ πῶς ἡμᾶς νομιοῦσι θεοὺς ἄνθρωποι κοὐχὶ κολοιούς, οἳ πετόμεσθα πτέρυγάς τ' ἔχομεν;). This is a seminal question, for, indeed, how do you know or come to accept or believe (Greek: νομίζειν) that a creature which so far was not a god *is* a god? Let us listen to Peisetairos' answer, which I summarize here.

It appears that there are two opposite manners, a negative and a positive one. First, if men in their stupidity think that birds are nothing and that only the Olympians are gods, then let the birds put men *and* gods to the test by gobbling up the entire harvest on the fields, and by picking out the eyes of all their cattle and next let men see whether the Olympians, more especially Demeter and Apollo, will help them. The phrasing implies that the gods are not really able

---

mous' atmosphere is sometimes explained as an expression of contemporary sceptical tendencies in Athens, e.g. Nilsson, *GGR* I 779–782; *Greek Piety* (Oxford 1948) 77 f. Auffarth contests this view, arguing that the utopian promise of the reign of the birds in the end turns into its contrary. In his view, Nephelokokkugia represents the reversed world, and as such evokes the imagery of the Anthesteria, a festival that is not supposed to continue infinitely but must come to an end. Similarly for the *Plutus*: Bierl 1994. Cf. also: W. Burkert, Götterspiel und Götterburleske in altorientalischen und griechischen Mythen, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 51 (1982) 335–367. On utopian imagery in comedy see Ch. IV n. 160. On supposed contemporary political influences on the *Birds* see below n.133. Dunbar 1995, 12 ff. has little to contribute to our issue.

[132] This is the translation by J. Henderson, *Aristophanes Birds* (Loeb Classical Library 2000). Other translators tend to shun the word 'believe' and squirm in their search for an acceptable translation. A.H. Sommerstein, *The Comedies of Aristophanes 6, Birds* (Warminster 1987): "And how are men going to get the notion that we're gods;" St. Halliwell, *Aristophanes Birds* (Oxford 1997): "But how will humans ever think we're really gods?;" M.-J. Alfonsi, *Théâtre d'Aristophane* II (Paris no date): "Mais comment les hommes reconnaîtront-ils que nous sommes des dieux?;" H. Van Daele, *Aristophane* III (Coll. Budé, Paris 1950): "Et comment les hommes nous tiendront ils pour des dieux?"

or willing to do so. But if, on the contrary, so Peisetairos continues (586), "men acknowledge that you *are* gods—that you are Life and you Earth and you Kronos and you Poseidon—all blessings will be at their disposal" (ἢν δ' ἡγῶνται σὲ θεόν, σὲ Βίον, σὲ δὲ Γῆν, σὲ Κρόνον, σὲ Ποσειδῶ, ἀγάθ' αὐτοῖσιν πάντα παρέσται). And asked what these divine blessings should be, Peisetairos mentions a list of things that can be bestowed by birds and which need only a modest redefinition to deserve the label 'divine'.

In a later passage (723 ff.) the new Bird-Gods (καινοὶ θεοί 848, 862) elaborate on their earlier promise to humankind:

> So if you acknowledge us as gods (ἢν οὖν ἡμᾶς νομίσητε θεούς 723) (.....) we won't run off and sit with our noses in the air, high in the clouds like Zeus, but *being present* we will give you (κοὐκ ἀποδράντες καθεδούμεθ' ἄνω σεμνυνόμενοι παρὰ ταῖς νεφέλαις ὥσπερ χὠ Ζεύς· ἀλλὰ παρόντες δώσομεν ὑμῖν.....726–9) healthy wealth, long life, peace, happiness, youth, laughter and dancing, feasts and birds' milk.

This is Utopian imagery, calling to mind the Golden Age of Kronos, which will return after the rebellion of men against the gods.[133]

Finally, at the end of the play, the great initiator of the new divine city, Peisetairos—who in the course of the play has undergone a gradual metamorphosis into a bird himself (654 f.; 803–806)[134] and hence has

---

[133] B. Zimmermann, Utopisches und Utopie in den Komödien des Aristophanes, *WJA* 9 (1983) 57–77; Dobrov 1997, Chapter 1 "The Theory and Practice of Utopia," 1–134, with a strong focus on Aristophanes' *Birds* throughout the book; M. Farioli, *Mundus alter. Utopie e distopie nella comedia greca antica* (Milano 2001). The myth of the struggle for power between the generations of the gods and the Gigantomachy has often been mentioned as the underlying theme of the *Birds*. See: Dunbar 1995, 7–11. In how far the (Utopian) imagery of the New City is intended as a commentary on contemporary politics and ideas, as has often been suggested, is not of direct relevance to our topic. K. Reinhardt, Aristophanes und Athen, in: *idem*, *Werken und Formen* (Bonn 1948) 285 ff. espec. 292 ff., sees Nephelokokkugia basically as an amalgamation of reality, mythical imagination and politics. Bowie 1993, 151–177, espec. 151, argues that the "play is intensely political in its examination of Athenian democracy in general and of the specific political situation at the time of its composition." On the paradoxical interplay of social, political and utopian discourses, see: D. Konstan, A City in the Air: Aristophanes' Birds, *Arethusa* 23 (1990) 183–207. R. Turasiewicz, The 'Birds' of Aristophanes: A Study of Its Ideas, *Eos* 84 (1996) 293–298, argues that the comedy stages a parody of contemporary political theories on the ideal state, some more utopian others realistic. Anyway, the play belongs to the most astonishingly candid representatives of satirical freedom of speech among Aristophanes' comedies. See: S. Halliwell, Comic Satire and Freedom of Speech in Classical Athens, *JHS* 111 (1991) 48–70.

[134] Throughout the play there is, for that matter, a persistent pattern of inversion and subversion. Over and over again, men are spoken of as birds, gods as birds or as

his share in the birds' deification—, with lady Sovereignty (Basileia)[135] at his side, usurps both the role and the paraphernalia of Zeus. Listen to the hymn announcing his arrival sung by the herald, 1706–1719:

> Hail you who enjoy all good fortune, beyond expression,
> hail you thrice-happy feathered race of the Birds.
> Welcome your lord and king (δέχεσθε τὸν τύραννον)[136] to his opulent halls.
> For he approaches, resplendent more by far
> than any brilliant star on its path of golden beams
> or even than the sun's own brilliant splendour.
> Such is the radiance flashing out from him. He comes,
> bringing a lady of beauty surpassing description.
> He brandishes the thunderbolt, the winged weapon of Zeus.
> An indescribable fragrance fills the vault of heaven.
> a fair spectacle, and the wreaths of incense-smoke
> are wafted apart by the breezes.

---

men, birds as men or as gods. See: H.-J. Newiger, *Metapher und Allegorie. Studien zu Aristophanes* (Munich 1957) 86–91; A.H. Sommerstein, *The Comedies of Aristophanes 6, Birds* (Warminster 1987) 3, who gives the evidence. This sometimes ends up in a confusing amalgamation of roles and characters: in the sacrificial scene the birds are 'upgraded' with divine epithets but one can just as well say that the gods are awarded ornithological epithets. This is a crucial observation for the whole issue of divine epithets.

[135] On the whole ritual of procession and epiphany see: A. Kavoulaki, Processional Performance and the Democratic Polis, in: Goldhill & Osborne 1999, 293–320, espec. 313–319, who (313) shows the remarkable verbal resemblance with Peisistratos' entry at Athens. On the identity of the "queen" see the fundamental discussion by H.-J. Newiger, *o.c.* (preceding note) 92–103. Among the many proposed identifications: Athena, Demeter, Queen Sovereignty, Zeus' Sovereignty, in the wake of Kleinknecht and Weinreich, he opts for the latter: "Die Hochzeit des Peithetairos mit der Königin ist ein Bestandteil seiner Epiphanie als neuer Zeus. (.....) In dieser Hochzeit vollzieht sich seine Apotheose und seine Herrschaftsantritt als höchster Gott" (99). See also the full discussion by H. Hofmann, *Mythos und Komödie: Untersuchungen zu den Vögeln des Aristophanes* (Hildesheim-New York 1976) 147–160. Cf. Dunbar 1995, *ad* 1537, who in my view rightly refuses to pin down the name on one of the well-known goddesses: "Ar. invented a divine bride for Peis. and named her Basileia." Much to be preferred to the theory of R. Hosek, Zu den thrakischen Gottheiten, *Eirene* 29 (1993) 31–42, espec. 40, who regards Basileia as a Thracian goddess of the Triballoi. Or also: J. Holzhausen, Pandora und Basileia. Hesiod-rezeption in Aristophanes' "Vögeln", *Philologus* 146 (2002) 34–45. The only thing of interest to us is that she is a goddess and in her name cannot but symbolize kingship.

[136] *Turannos* is the common term for sovereign in both tragedy and Aristophanean comedy, when referring to mythical rulers. D. Lenfant, Rois et tyrans dans le théâtre d'Aristophane, *Ktema* 22 (1997) 185–200, demonstrates that *turannos* and *basileus* are used indiscriminately in mythical contexts, while for the contemporary historical situation *basileus* is mainly reserved for barbarian kings (as for instance the Persians) and *turannos* for the Greek world.

> But here he is in person! Now let the divine Muses
> open her holy lips in auspicious song.

If I have been rather generous with quotations, this was in order to enable the reader to discover the salient similarities with the various materials of deification that we encountered earlier in this chapter. Aristophanes' *Birds* presents in a satirical persiflage a near complete picture of the construction of gods as Greeks envisaged it. It corresponds to the detail with the *serious* play in the deifications of early Hellenistic rulers and other characters: Klearchos, Menekrates, and most of all Demetrios. The analogies include:

- founding a city with a 'heavenly' name;
- cultic forms of worship of mortal creatures (birds and men), including sacrificial meals and the singing of hymns,
- all this as a direct corollary of specific *aretai* and power. If, in the words of Nock, "miracle (= superhuman feats = ἀρετή) proves deity," it is no less true that sovereignty attracts the notion of divinity,
- emphasis on the superiority of the new gods over the traditional deities, as exemplified in the antithesis: presence and saving assistance (two semantic aspects of the verb πάρειμι) versus distance and inertia,[137]
- in both cases the praise of the new god culminates in a hymn in which the god is welcomed at his advent. He is accompanied by a 'real'—though not unequivocally identifiable—goddess and is compared with sun and stars.

The striking similarity between the two hymns might suggest imitation, which, if true, would lend support to an ironic interpretation of the Demetrios hymn. The question remains open; with the exception of Kleinknecht, the resemblance between the two hymns has escaped notice. In my view, we have here an instance of spontaneous analogy as a result of similar motivation in comparable circumstances. No doubt the two hymns were inspired by traditional hymns sung at the occasion of the *epidemia* of 'real' gods as well as by λόγοι εἰσιτήριοι, songs sung at the arrival of prominent people, as mentioned earlier in n. 42.

---

[137] A good analogon of such a comparison of divine benefactors and the preference of one group due to their superior gifts can be found in Menander fr. 614 (Sandbach) where as against Epicharmos' gods: winds, water, earth, sun, fire, stars, the speaker prefers as useful gods (χρησίμους θεούς): silver and gold, since they give everything you wish: a farm, houses, servants, friends, judges, witnesses.

7. Making a God: A Multiple Perspective Approach

Men into gods, birds into gods. The term 'theopoetics' for the processes involved should be taken literally, for men and birds are indeed 'made into' gods. Not only men and birds. In Plato *Euthyphro* 3, Socrates explains that Meletos accuses him of: ποιητὴν εἶναι θεῶν, καὶ ὡς καινοὺς ποιοῦντα θεοὺς τοὺς δ'ἀρχαίους οὐ νομίζοντα…("being a maker/manufacturer of gods and that while making new gods I do not believe in/acknowledge the old gods"). Most probably the expression 'to make new gods' here refers to the deification of things that were not regarded as divine before: *not* foreign gods but such things as celestial objects.[138] Verbs meaning 'to make or create a god' such as ἀποθεόω, θεοποιέω, and even θεὸν ποιεῖν, do occur in official language, but are not in evidence before the Hellenistic era, most of them not before the imperial period.[139] One might say that the *explicit* making (= *creating*) of new gods in comedy is a deliberately hyperbolic, derisive device as opposed to the *implicit* making (= *recognizing*) of gods in 'serious' ruler cult.

In the comedy the birds' pretence is undermined by references to their ornithological menu.[140] Comedy is a play intended to spoil the rules of the game and in doing so to unmask the sincere pretence as pretence, exposing the emperor's garb as worse than transparent. For this reason it is the most daringly honest type of expression that Athenian culture could boast. Especially so since the whole scene implies

---

[138] P. Ciholas, Socrates. Maker of New Gods, *Class. Bull.* 57 (1980–81) 17–20; Th.C. Brickhouse & N.D. Smith, *Socrates on Trial* (Oxford 1989), 35: "If the charge is to make any sense as a charge of impiety, it must be that Socrates introduces as divinities new entities that are not real divinities at all." Cf. Versnel 1990, 126.

[139] Hiller von Gaertringen, RE s.v. Apotheosis 1896. Full discussion: Habicht 1970, 174–179.

[140] And, of course, through a number of other strategies. One is language. When Peisetairos asks Tereus who will reveal his plan to the birds, Tereus tells him that he can do it himself, since the birds have learned Greek (198–200). Without this little intermezzo Hellenophone birds—being nothing more than an unavoidable narrative device—would not have attracted undue attention. By the mere fact of its mentioning—that is by its being put into focus—, the absurdity of Greek-speaking birds becomes apparent and the effect is laughter. All this just as in the case of Hellenophone Polyphemos (above p. 386). Cf. Bowie 1993, 173: "in this device there is too the tacit admission that even in comedy it is not 'really' possible to create a bird-state without such concessions to dramatic illusion: a chorus saying nothing but 'totinx' and 'kikkabau' would scarcely be tolerable or a credible world force."

a scathing critique of the gods as well, staging them as the losers in a competition with mortal pretenders.

Significantly, the verb νομίζειν—the term so vigorously disputed in the discussion on the charge against Socrates θεοὺς οὓς ἡ πόλις νομίζει οὐ νομίζοντα ("that he does not acknowledge or believe in the gods whom the polis acknowledges")—appears twice in the passages we discussed.[141] Once it is the result of a test: if creatures—here the birds—can perform powerful deeds which are normally attributed to the gods, then they are 'acknowledged' as gods. The other time it is in a conditional proposition: only on the condition that they are acknowledged as gods are the divine birds willing to bestow their blessings. Νομίζειν, in religious contexts often—and rightly as I argue in Appendix IV—translated as 'to believe in', appears to be negotiable, a bargaining instrument in a reciprocal relationship, and hence dependent on the qualities offered by the other party.

Exactly the same in ruler cult: the creation of the new god seems to consist first and foremost in his recognition as a god.[142] There is a variety of expressions: to honour him as a god (ὡς θεὸν τιμᾶν αὐτόν, ἰσόθεοι τιμαί),[143] to sacrifice to him as to a god (θυεῖν αὐτῷ ὥσπερ θεῷ), to proclaim him god (θεὸν ἀναγορεύειν αὐτόν), to consider him god (θεὸν νομίζειν αὐτόν). All these are decisions issued by the people, they are acts of recognition in a double sense of that word: acknowledgment of his divine status—*inter alia* resulting in the predicate *theos*, very common in inscriptions[144]—and expression of gratitude—resulting e.g. in the predicates *soter* and *euergetes*.[145]

---

[141] Once we encounter ἡγεῖσθαι. Fahr 1969, 71–80, discusses the testimonia in the comedies of Aristophanes—νομίζειν 6 times, ἡγεῖσθαι 4—where the two verbs occur in connection with the god. He demonstrates that, depending on context, the terms occur in different denotations: "take for valid currency," "acknowledge (as)" but also, and undeniably so, "believe in (the divinity or the existence of a god)." See further Appendix IV.

[142] See the fundamental discussion by Habicht 1970, 171–179. At p. 171 he writes: "Der Beschluß der Gemeinde schafft die Göttlichkeit nicht, sondern erkennt sie als bestehend an, er hat somit nicht konstitutiven, sondern deklamatorischen Charakter; mit anderen Wörten: die Stadt kann keine Götter machen."

[143] The evidence for the latter expression: Habicht 1970, 196 n. 23.

[144] Collection of testimonia: Habicht 1970, 156 n. 75. For a recent survey of the discussion whether *theios*, generally explained as the translation of Latin *divus* (hence referring to a deceased emperor) was also applied to living divine rulers like the superlative *theiotatos* see: J.-Y. Strasser, L'empereur ΘΕΙΟΣ et une inscription de Laodicée du Lykos, *EA* 37 (2004) 129–143, espec. 129–136.

[145] *Soter* and *euergetes* are royal and divine titles *par excellence*: P. Wendland, ΣΩΤΗΡ, *ZNTW* 5 (1904) 335–353; W. Schubart, Das hellenistische Königsideal nach

The evidence presented in this chapter confronts us with interesting, and at first sight astounding paradoxes, if not inconsistencies. Consider, for instance, the culinary allusions that are invoked when it comes to either making a god or unmasking a god as a pretender. When Aristophanes wishes to footnote that the birds are pretenders, he does so by a reference to their bird-food. When king Philippos wishes to expose Menekrates as a pretender he offers him sacrificial food in the form of incense and libations. When, on the contrary, the Athenians wish to proclaim Demetrios a real god, they offer him the very same sacrificial diet of incense and libations. Both presenting and denying mortal food may unmask the pretender, while libations and incense may either construct or deconstruct divinity. Of course, once more this variation is dictated by the differences of occasion, context, target, in sum: focus. What seems to be inconsistent when viewed on one level and from one perspective turns out to represent an enormously productive resource of multiperspective options.

Once more, it is all a matter of focalizing. As we discussed in the fourth chapter, in everyday cult, unlike in myth, the Olympian sacrifice is not—and certainly not consistently, consciously or explicitly—conceived of as a meal for the gods.[146] During the burning of the *meria* the focus is not on nourishment, but—if on anything at all (Frits Staal

---

Inschriften und Papyri, *APF* 12 (1937) 1–26, espec. 13 ff.; *idem*, Das Königsbild des Hellenismus, *Die Antike* 13 (1937) 272–288; A.D. Nock, *Soter* and *Euergetes*, in: S.E. Johnson, *The Joy of Study. Papers… presented to honor F.C. Grant* (1951) 127–48 = *idem*, 1972, 720–735; Habicht 1970, 156–160. On *soter* see most recently the abundant literature and discussion in: F. Jung, ΣΩΤΗΡ*: Studien zur Rezeption eines hellenistischen Ehrentitels im Neuen Testament* (Münster 2002). The predicate *euergetes*, though, was more frequently applied to human benefactors than to gods. See: F.W. Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Field* (St. Louis 1982); K. Bringmann, The King as Benefactor: Some Remarks on Ideal Kingship in the Age of Hellenism, in: A. Bulloch *et alii* (edd.), *Images and Ideologies. Self-definition in the Hellenistic World* (Berkeley 1993) 7–24. In the same period euergetism developed as a social phenomen: P. Veyne, *Le pain et le cirque. Sociologie historique d'un pluralisme politique* (Paris 1976) 185–374; Gauthier 1985. Concrete expressions of this euergetism are documented in the donations of Hellenistic rulers to cities in: W. Ameling *et alii*, *Schenkungen hellenistischer Herrscher an griechische Städte und Heiligtümer* I, *Zeugnisse und Kommentar* (Berlin 1995). This royal quality as incentive to ruler cult is specifically emphasized by Habicht 1970, espec. 222–229. Cf. above n. 51. Demetrios Poliorketes himself in his attempt to persuade the Athenians to let him go through all three stages of the Eleusinian initiation at once (and in the wrong month) argued that it would befit him διὰ τὰς εὐεργεσίας (Diod. Sic. 20.110.1).

[146] On the polysemantics of sacrifice see recently: Van Straten 2006.

is not entirely wrong)[147]—on communication. As soon, however, as the focus shifts towards alimentary notions, funny things happen. Suddenly one may become aware that *knise* does not represent the height of nutrition. Consequently, a wealth of puns and practical jokes becomes available as daggers to the hands of comic authors, philosophers, detractors of popular belief, and of the royal joker Philippos. So—as so often before—one should beware of mixing up registers.[148] That is what king Demetrios and his spectators kept in mind, thus—for the moment—successfully escaping mocking reactions.

The essential observation, however, is that it is all in the hands of man, who is, to quote Socrates, ποιητὴς θεῶν (a manufacturer/maker of gods) and has the power to decide whether or not to acknowledge (νομίζειν) a mortal creature as a god. The blessings provided by or expected from the new god may differ in their nature. As we remarked earlier rulers were not the only and not the earliest mortals of whom we hear that they received divine cultic honours in Greece. Especially in the classical and early Hellenistic periods, which are our present concern, we have evidence for cultic honours for philosophers, athletes, and doctors. But what then is the final decisive factor in the dilemma of acknowledging or denying divinity? In order to find an answer we need one last little, but revealing, piece of information.

The same king Philippos who played his unholy little game with doctor Menekrates Zeus had himself been enjoying divine honours already since 357 BC. The inhabitants of Amphipolis brought sacrifices to him *as to a god* (Ael. Arist. *Or.* 38.715D: ἔθυον ὡς θεῷ).[149] And at

---

[147] There is perhaps some truth in the idea that "learning a practical or social skill means *removing the procedures from consciousness*," as argued by P.B. Medawar, Does Ethology Throw any Light on Human's Behaviour?, in: P.P.G. Bateson & R.A. Hinde (edd.), *Growing Points in Ethology* (Cambridge 1976). In other words, if many skills acquired by cultural learning are applied—and can be only consistently applied—by *switching off conscious consideration*, this does not do much to support the idea that expression or meaning are dominant elements in communicative skills and techniques such as sacrifice.

[148] Or in the words of J.Z. Smith 1982, 55, particularly fitting the present issue: "The dilemma for the ritualist is that if everything signifies, the result will be either insanity or banality. Understood from such a perspective, *ritual is an exercise in the strategy of choice.* What to include? What to hear as a message? What to see as a sign? What to perceive as having double meaning? What to exclude? What to allow to remain as background noise? What to understand as simply 'happening'? It is all about the *economy of signification*."

[149] See: Habicht 1970, 11 ff. On sacrificing 'as if' to a god or a heros in Pausanias, see recently: Pirenne-Delforge 2008, 187–207: Sacrificier "comme à un dieu" ou "comme à un heros."

the occasion of a theatrical festival he had his own statue carried along in the procession of the twelve gods, thus becoming the *triskaidekatos theos*, the thirteenth Olympian, as Weinreich has argued.[150] The ambiguity that is the central issue of this chapter manifests itself in an exemplary way if we also know that the same king had himself daily reminded by a slave that he was a mortal being: ὅτι ἄνθρωπος ἐστι. Receiving sacrifices as a god, playing the thirteenth god, yet realizing that you are a mortal being: that is what I would call double awareness, what the Greeks called ἐπαμφοτερίζειν, and what in Victor Turner's terms is the simultaneity of 'as if' and 'as is'.[151]

So what then *is* the decisive reason for acknowledging Philippos' and denying Menekrates' divinity? In other words: what *is* the difference between Menekrates and Philippos? The once popular answer,

---

[150] Diod. 16.92.6 and 95.1. Even the sceptic Hammond 1999, 107 and n.14, admits that here the king was indeed "equalling himself with the gods," and at p. 13 draws further conclusions for other events. Divine cult during his lifetime for Philippos is now solidly attested for the city of Philippi (*SEG* 38.658), where an epigraphical list of possessors of sacred land mention Philippos among gods (Ares and Poseidon) and heroes.

[151] That such ambiguous behaviour was in complete concordance with the king's nature—and indeed with the program of the beginning ruler cult—is splendidly illustrated by the round Philippeion at Olympia, which initially contained the chryselephantine statues of Philippos II, Alexander, Philippos' father, Amyntas, Olympias, and Philippos' mother Eurydice. Concerning the function and nature of this building there has been much discussion, although most scholars agree that it was an explicitly dynastic monument. Recent scholarship, however, seems to agree on its basic—and intentional—ambiguity. See: E.N. Borza, *In the Shadow of Olympus: The Emergence of Macedon* [Princeton 1990] 250; C. Wikander, Religion, Political Power, and Gender. The Building of a Cult Image, in: P. Hellström & B. Alroth (edd.), *Religion and Power in the Ancient Greek World*, *Proceedings of the Uppsala Symposium 1993* (Uppsala 1996) 183–188; E.D. Carney, The Initiation of Cult for Royal Macedonian Women, *CPh* 95 (2000) 21–43, espec. 24 ff.; O. Palagia, Philip's Eurydice in the Philippeum at Olympia, in: Carney & Ogden 2010, 33–41. I quote here the apt formulations of Carney 2000, 212 f.: "The Philippeum looked like a temple (…). It contained statues that looked like cult statues, yet there is no evidence for divine cult. It was *not* a temple. (…) Its shape resembled that of *heroa* but there is no evidence for heroic honors. It was *not* a *heroon*. We know what it was not but cannot be sure what it was, and that is the point. What was it then? Philip offered those who visited the Panhellenic shrine a way to think about the power he had come to exercise. The Philippeum did not assert that this power was divine, but it implied that it might be and suggested that this power was *like* the power of the gods. It parallels his decision to have his own statue appear with that of the twelve Olympians." Cf. also *eadem*, *Olympias: Mother of Alexander the Great* (New York – London 2006) 88–103, on the queen's attitude vis-à-vis the question of deification. This is a perfect—but not unique—plastic transformation of the ambiguity that we detected earlier in the verbal rhetoric of ruler adulation. There and here the art was to leave options open and available for momentary shifts in interpretation: 'Augenblicksglauben'. The world of 'as if' makes an invasion into the world of 'as is.'

now long antiquated, that the first was a lunatic and the latter a clever politician—thus by implication on the one hand marginalizing and on the other politicizing the cult of (Greek) mortals *and* keeping the two nicely apart—simply does not work. Of course the first thing that comes to mind is the difference in social and political status, the difference between the sphere of the private person and that of public royal authority, including their respective social and cultural platforms. Yet Klearchos, closer to Menekrates than to Philippos in terms of his theatrical behaviour, was the learned brother of a king and ruled over a kingdom himself.

Another factor may have been that Menekrates impersonated a *specific* individual god, even the supreme god, while rulers generally were honoured as *a* god, but not as a specific individual god. However, as we have seen, here, too, there are exceptions and the boundaries between the two representations are far from neat. For one thing, the distinction between a mortal elevated to divinity and a god descending and appearing on earth in the shape of a mortal is difficult to make, as Antiochos IV, who identified himself with Zeus Kataibates, demonstrated, and as Paul and Barnabas experienced in a different manner.

In my view the essential difference is spelled out in the sources we have read. Philippos honestly *played* the god and *was* man. *Vere deus vere homo*. He reserved the 'as if' simultaneity for ritual occasions, where it belongs and which it helps to define. Menekrates, on the other hand, *never stopped* 'playing the god', thus never leaving his subjunctive world and hence neglecting the art of ἐπαμφοτερίζειν. Menekrates (like Alexarchos and similar later ones) did not keep to the rules of the game.[152] The result is that Menekrates fatally reduced the necessary range of different discourses to a single—the ludic—one, thus cancelling normal communication.

The anthropologist Maurice Bloch[153] suggests that ritual makes its statements appear powerful or holy by reducing the creativity of

---

[152] Cf. Pruyser 1968, 190: "Playing requires a circumscribed play space [and as I already suggested in connection with J.Z. Smith's 'taking place'—and as Pruyser himself stresses elsewhere in the same context—, we should add "and a circumscribed play time"]. Within that play space (and time) there are definite rules: the rules of the game. They are invalid outside that space (and time), and they hold only as long as the play or game lasts."

[153] M. Bloch, Symbols, Song, Dance and Features of Articulation: Is religion an extreme form of traditional authority?, *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 15 (1974) 55–81 = Bloch 1989, 19–45. I owe the reference to this very important paper to

syntax (as for instance in stylized speech or singing). This leads to semantic processes different from more ordinary forms of communication. The latter deal with reality, with the interplay of perception and communication. They can be used to report facts, and, characterized by 'propositional force,' they have meaning potential (comparable to Turner's 'as is'); the first do not relate in any immediate way to reality, indeed are often used to hide reality and are by Bloch characterized as having 'illocutionary force' or 'performative force' (comparable to Turner's 'as if'). According to Bloch this means that ritual implies the loss of the "very potential for communication" (that is that type of communication that we know from daily life).[154] Adopting Bernstein's concept of 'restricted code',[155] Bloch argues that the formalization of ritual speech therefore dramatically restricts what can be said, so the speech acts are either all alike or all of a kind and thus there is hardly any *choice* of what can be said: "You cannot argue with a song." At p. 42 he gives a perfect summary of what I have tried to argue in the present chapter:

> The study of ritual should avoid two things: 1) jumping from the inside of religious discourse to everyday speech when producing an explanation, and 2) either directly or indirectly using logical forms.

Bloch's observations may serve as a critical warning to those who would stretch the principle of subjunctive simultaneity in premodern societies as encompassing the total reality of social and cultural life. Rather, in these societies, too, it is restricted to situations that require a 'make believe', situations that, however, are more universal and pervasive in that pre-modern world. By monopolizing the 'as if' Menekrates transgressed the boundaries of the ludic, hence made himself unavailable

---

Naerebout 1997, 333 ff., who provides an interesting critical discussion. See now: Kowalzig 2007, 49–53, for praise and creative use of Bloch's ritual theory.

[154] At p. 33 he calls this "communication which excludes explanation." Hence, in the ritual language there are no alternatives, and no contradictions, and thus no logic.

[155] B.A. Bernstein, *Class, Codes and Control 1: Theoretical Studies towards a Sociology of Language* (London 1974) 76 ff. Transposed to visual art this is in the words of E. Gombrich, 'L'image visuelle' in: *L'écologie des images* (Paris 1983) 323–349, 'exprimer' rather than 'communiquer' (communication, which like Bloch he here understands as sharing explicit and expressible notions). Hence the reception of an image is at most a 'communication faible' or 'communication problématique' in the words of J.-Cl. Passeron, 'L'usage faible des images', in: *Le raisonnement sociologique: l'espace non-poppérien du raisonnement natural* (Paris 1991) 281–288, who also coins the terms 'non assertorique' or 'quasi assertorique'.

for normal 'as is' communication. Contrarily, Philippos knew the art of ἐπαμφοτερίζειν. So did other Hellenistic kings and Roman emperors after him, with those exceptions that exactly illustrate my point: Antiochos Epiphanes, Caligula, Nero, Domitian, the latter two more or less. Now, if I am reminded that this distinction largely concurs with the accepted modern definition of mental disturbance as opposed to mental health, I have nothing to object. It still leaves us, though, with Philippos and a host of epigones on the 'good' side of the boundary line between normal and abnormal, yet performing very funny ritual acts, which a former generation of scholars contended (the) Greeks could not believe in and which as I have argued they yet ἐνομίζον with the honest hypocrisy of a ritual 'Augenblicksglauben'. And that is what all this was about.

EPILOGUE

A funerary inscription found in Termessos (Pisidia) records that a lady by the name of Rhodope "has here buried her dog ὡς ἄνθρωπον" ("as a human being").[1] That means that she made ritually explicit the implicit anthropomorphism that man cannot avoid even if he wishes to, as we have discussed in the opening section of Chapter V. Incidentally, we have quite a few funerary inscriptions and epigrammatic poems for animals, including pigs. Pigs are men.[2]

In a famous passage Herodotus 2.44 (cf. Pausanias 2.10.1) praises those Greeks, especially the inhabitants of Thasos, who maintain a double cult of Herakles, with two sanctuaries, in one of which they make sacrifices (θύουσι) to him as Olympian and divine, and in the other pay him such sacrificial honour (ἐναγίζουσι) as due to a hero. The two Greek terms, used alternatively, refer to different practices, one connected with βωμοὶ θεῶν (high, square altars for food sacrifices) for the Olympian gods, and the other with ἐσχάραι ἡρώων (low, circular altars for holocaustic burnt offerings) to heroes and chthonian gods. This is stated most explicitly in a note by Porphyry (third century AD), but already in references long before his time.[3] What we see

---

[1] B. Iplikçioglu *et alii, Epigrafische Forschungen in Termessos und seinem Territorium* 1 (1991) 39–42, no. 22; *SEG* 41.1283.

[2] Generally on mourning for animals: G. Herrlinger, *Totenklage um Tiere in der Antiken Dichtung* (Tübinger Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft 8, Tübingen 1930). Epitaphs for dogs: T. Purola, P. Cair. Zen. 4.59532—Two Epitaphs for a Hunting Dog Called Tauron, *Arctos* 28 (1994) 55–62. Very informative: M.G. Granino Cecere, Il sepolcro della catella Aeolis, *ZPE* 100 (1994) 413–421. In a funerary epigram (*EG* 627,2) the passer-by is asked not to laugh "if he finds this to be the grave of a dog." Cf. also *SGO*, Register s.v. 'Hund'. As to pigs, the idea that a piglet can be cherished to the degree that its master has a funerary epigram placed on its grave has elicited a fierce discussion on an inscription from Edessa (P.M. Petsas, *AAA* 2 [1969] 189–191; *SEG* 25.711). A *choiros* has been killed in a traffic accident with a chariot and is being mourned over by its owner. Even though a pig is pictured on the stone, some scholars assume that Choiros is the name of a slave infant. For that matter, pigs were considered to be intelligent animals, and the Testamentum Porcelli, in its own satirical manner, testifies to that: E. Champlin, The Testament of the Piglet, *Phoenix* 41 (1987) 174–183.

[3] On this text and some others by Porphyry see recently: S.I. Johnston, *Porphyry, Sacrifice, and the Orderly Cosmos: On the Philosophy to be Derived from Oracles Fragments 314 and 315, Kernos* 23 (2010). For the recent discussion on Olympian/chthonian see above Ch. I, p. 144 n. 432.

is a Herakles who receives both participatory offerings 'as to a god' and holocaustic ones 'as to a hero.' Or are they two different Herakleis?

Pausanias 8.34 tells us that, when Orestes was stricken by a fit of madness, the Eumenides appeared to him black, whence he offered a holocaust sacrifice to turn away their wrath. After he had bitten off his finger, they appeared white, he was cured at the sight, and he brought normal sacrifices to them. In the now famous Lex Sacra of Selinous[4] first a sacrifice to the Tritopatores is prescribed 'as to the impure' and immediately thereafter to the Tritopatores 'as to the pure'. Purification before and after: the circumstances have changed, hence the rites, but also the gods. Man can make a hero into a god by treating him as a god (and vice versa).

The malleability and indeed multiperspectiveness of the question whether a supernatural being was a god or a hero finds a most salient illustration in the following example. When the inhabitants of Oropos argued that their local hero Amphiaraos was a god, Sulla accepted their plea and granted them privileges accordingly. But since land of the gods was exempt from taxation, the Roman tax-farmers contested this decision, declaring in the manner of the Epicureans that those who had been men could not be immortal. The consuls of 73 BC, their advisers and the Senate decided against them and confirmed Sulla's verdict. We have the inscription to that effect: *Syll.*[3] 747. Cicero *ND* 3.49, however, who was one of the advisers, later quoted the view of the tax-farmers with approval.[5] Time and again it appears that in matters of religious classification it is man who decides. Just as it is the Pope who, instructed by his 'senate' and advisers, determines whether a dead person is just a dead person or a saint. Gods and heroes have small say in these matters.

A fable of Babrios (no. 30, above p. 330) tells us that a sculptor was trying to sell a marble statue of Hermes. One man wanted it for a gravestone, another wanted to set it up as an image of the god himself (ὃς μὲν εἰς στήλην, ὁ δὲ ὡς θεὸν καθιδρύσων). In his sleep the sculp-

[4] See above Ch. I n. 152.

[5] On Cicero's miraculous versatility when it came to the choice between gods and heroes see: Weinstock 1971, 290. On the whole controversy see: Sineux 2007, Ch. III, also on the territory of the Amphiaraos sanctuary at Oropos. This was not the first controversy with relation to Amphiaraos. See: Hyp. *Eux.* 14–18, concerning a dispute about the ownership of a piece of land at Oropos: was it the God's? Pirenne-Delforge 2008, 252 f. discusses this issue in the context of the relationship of hero-god in Pausanias.

tor saw Hermes who said to him: "So then, my fate is being weighed in your balances: it remains to be seen whether you will make me a corpse or a god" (ἢ γάρ με νεκρὸν ἢ θεὸν σὺ ποιήσεις). One of the functions of satirical genres such as comedy and fable is to reveal and problematize tensions, contradictions and inconsistencies in a culture through a process of literary alienation. The present fable shows, two millennia before Jonathan Z. Smith, the truth of his statement that:

> There is nothing that is inherently sacred or profane. These are not substantive categories, but rather situational or relational categories, mobile boundaries which shift according to the map being employed. (……) The sacra are sacred solely because they are used in a sacred place; there is no inherent difference between a sacred vessel and an ordinary one.[6]

So it appears that in Greek culture it is up to man's decision what to make of an animal, a human, a hero, a god. Within the boundaries drawn by their culture Greeks could play, define, classify, in short *create* according to their will. They can make a dog into a human being, a mortal into a god, a hero into a god, and a god into a corpse. Greeks, as we have seen throughout this book, were practically omnipotent in playing with the divine. Divinity and the forms in which it manifests itself are exclusively and totally dependent on human cultural readiness to join the play, that is, to its cultural acceptability. Pericles (Plut. *Per.* 8.9) says about the gods:

> We don't see them but on account of the honours which they receive and the good things they bestow on us we judge them to be immortal (οὐ γὰρ ἐκείνους αὐτοὺς ὁρῶμεν, ἀλλὰ ταῖς τιμαῖς ἃς ἔχουσι, καὶ τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς ἃ παρέχουσιν, ἀθανάτους εἶναι τεκμαιρόμεθα).

His context requires emphasis on 'immortality', but with just a little variation pretty much the same could be—and as we have seen often was—said about the divinity of human rulers: "they are gods on account of the honours they receive and the good things they bestow on us."[7] All this is equally valid as an illustration of the precarious

---

[6] Smith 1982, 55.

[7] In Xen. *Mem.* 4.3.13 Socrates tells Euthydemus not to hang around 'waiting for the gods to appear to you in bodily presence' but rather to infer their presence and active intervention in human affairs from their works (μὴ ἀναμένῃς ἕως ἂν τὰς μορφὰς τῶν θεῶν ἴδῃς, ἀλλ' ἐξαρκῇ σοι τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν ὁρῶντι σέβεσθαι καὶ τιμᾶν τοὺς θεούς). He concludes (4.3.14): "For these reasons it behooves us not to despise the things that are unseen, but, realising their power in their manifestations, to honour the godhead" (χρὴ….μὴ καταφρονεῖν τῶν ἀοράτων, ἀλλ' ἐκ τῶν γιγνομένων τὴν δύναμιν αὐτῶν

reciprocal relationship of gods and men. Each of the two parties is, for his existence, dependent on the other.

Extraordinary mortals are not alone in playing a god or the god. Gods do the same, they 'play god' on the religious stage. And in both plays man—in his cultural setting—is the stage manager and director. Each chapter of this book offered a new and often baffling illustration of Greeks' ingenious and creative versatility in this field of religious play. It is man who decides that 'our mother of the gods' is from right here, not the one from Asia Minor and that 'our Demeter' is black and married to Poseidon. Man, too, decides at which moment Herakles or Amphiaraos is a god and at which a hero, when Zeus is Olympian and when Chthonian, and whether the one Zeus is identical with or different from the other. Man determines that 'the gods' may be arbitrary and whimsical in their interferences in human life *and* that they may represent the principle of justice. He may proclaim that "this god is one" while at the same time acknowledging the many. He may claim Hermes, albeit a god, as a near-human comrade, *inter alia* by administering the appropriate diets. He may assert that Asklepios can do whatever he wants and yet may fail in immediate professional assistance, that gods are omnipotent *and* that their power is restricted. *And* he may define a mortal as a god and play the sincere hypocritical play that goes with it. Playing the god—playing with gods: the two appear to have more in common than we might have imagined, and to both of them the selfsame iron law applies: that is *not* to mix up the different registers of this *divina commedia*.

Culinary notions played a revealing role in various chapters. "Are you a goddess or a mortal woman?" asked hungry Odysseus. The inhabitants of Lystra did not ask whether Paul and Barnabas were gods, but defined them as such and brought oxen to make a sacrifice. Greeks made Hermes play the *human* by making him share their own *mortal* dinner. The Athenians made Demetrios play the god by providing him

---

καταμανθάνοντα τιμᾶν τὸ δαιμόνιον). Cf. Galenus in the recently found Greek version of *De propriis placitis*, 2 (V. Boudon-Millot & A. Pietrobelli, Édition *princeps* du *de propriis placitis*, *REG* 118 [2005] 168–213): After having confessed that like Protagoras he was ignorant of the substance/essence (οὐσία) of the gods, Galenus continues: "but that they exist I know from their works" (ὅτι δ'εἰσὶν ἐκ τῶν ἔργων γιγνώσκειν). After mentioning the miracles of Asklepios of Pergamon and the Dioskouroi at sea he concludes: "So I believe it does no harm that people do not know the *ousia* of the gods, but I have decided to honour them according to ancient custom." Which comes very close to the little poem by Philemon, quoted above. p. 473.

with a *theoxenion* à la Dionysos, and with, *inter alia, thumiamata* in 291 BC (Democharès 75 F.2). Philippos made Menekrates *lose his divinity* by forcing him to share such *divine* foodstuffs. Strange bits and pieces which only reveal their relevance by first deconstructing and next reconstructing—always by means of contextualizing—the picture in which they belong. It is in my view the only way to protect our Greeks against those late modern monolithical and mono-paradigmatic dogmas which I realize cannot always be avoided but which—as I hope to have shown—too often impose on the gods and their world a lapidarity of such an unbearable heaviness that even (Greek) gods could not lift it up. It was about time, so I thought, to give the gods of the Greeks the theological treatment which I saw announced as a psychotherapy in the book of the New York psychotherapist Mark Epstein: "Going to pieces without falling apart."

APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE

GROUPING THE GODS

1. *All the Gods*

The two oracle instructions from Delphi transmitted by Dem. 21.51 and 43.66, cited above p. 48, after giving a list of gods, both add:

> and fill the streets with sacrificial smoke and set up bowls and dances, and wear garlands according to ancestral custom. Raising your hands make thank-offerings to the Olympian gods and goddesses, all of them (θεοῖς Ὀλυμπίοις καὶ Ὀλυμπίαις πάντεσσι καὶ πάσαις).

We have met similar formulas in the inscription from Kolophon (p. 88) and various curse texts of Asia Minor (p. 106). Many other literary and epigraphical texts confirm the currency of the notion "all the (other) gods" as for instance represented in the expressions καὶ τοὺς λοιποὺς θεούς or καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους θεοὺς πάντας καὶ πάσας[1] added to one or more named individual gods.[2] We find them from Homer[3] onwards, in the archaic and classical periods *e.g.* Lyc. *Leoc.* 1 "I pray to Athena and the other gods[4] and heroes established in the city and country" (εὔχομαι γὰρ τῇ Ἀθηνᾷ καὶ τοῖς ἀλλοῖς θεοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἥρωσι κατὰ

---

[1] Once πάντας τοὺς ἐν Ὀλύμπῳ θεοὺς καὶ πάσας (*IG* XII.3.98, Nisyros). Latin inscriptions with *ceteris dis deabusque* and variants far outnumber the Greek analogues. The earliest (3d c. BC) on an altar at Veii (*ILLRP* I no. 27).

[2] The full (though, due to the enormous increase in epigraphical testimonies, naturally no longer exhaustive) evidence in Jacobi 1930 is still remarkably adequate and useful. Pulleyn 1997, 109 ff., unconvincingly tries to deny the formulaic nature of the expression *pantes theoi* because he finds its occurrence in actual prayers not sufficiently frequent. His list, however, due to his narrow definition of prayer but also for other reasons, is very deficient. He fails to mention the testimonies cited below p. 503 as well as various others such as Ar. *Thesm.* 331–334; Xen. *Cyr.* 1.6.1. προσευξάμενος Ἑστιᾷ Πατρῴᾳ καὶ Διὶ Πατρῴῳ καὶ τοῖς ἀλλοῖς θεοῖς.

[3] Ζεῦ κύδιστε μέγιστε καὶ ἀθάνατοι θεοὶ ἄλλοι occurs frequenty. See Pulleyn 108 n. 30, who rightly stresses that it is especially in combination with Zeus that "the other gods" are added. In *Il.* 9.357 Achilleus will take leave ἰρὰ Διὶ ῥέξας καὶ πᾶσι θεοῖσι.

[4] 'Athena and the other gods' is a standard formula in Athenian context. Cf. Ar. *Eccl.* 476; Alexis fr. 247.14; Din. 1.64. A case in point, of course, are οἱ ἄλλοι θεοί at Athens, as opposed to the Eleusinian goddesses or to ἡ θεά (Athena), as mentioned in *IG* I^2 310 and 324, on which see: T. Linders, *The Treasurers of the Other Gods in Athens and Their Functions* (Meisenheim 1975), espec. 14 ff.

τὴν πόλιν καὶ τὴν χώραν ἱδρυμένοις)[5] and increasingly in inscriptions of the Hellenistic and Imperial periods.[6]

Especially in oath-formulas the formula seems to have been compulsory. In a treaty of the 6th century BC we already find as witnesses: "Zeus, Apollo and the other gods (and the city of Poseidonia)" (*Staatsverträge* II 120.5ff.). Among the 82 known treaty texts between Cretan cities, those which contain oaths consistently have the formula καὶ θεοὺς πάντας καὶ πάσας (in divergent dialectical notations) added to varying lists of named gods.[7] Decisive proof of its currency is presented by parodies in comedy. Ar. *Av.* 866 has a prayer "to all the Olympian birds, male and female" (ὄρνισιν Ὀλυμπίοις καὶ Ὀλυμπίαις πᾶσι καὶ πάσαις) and in *Thesm.* 331–334 the leader invites the the chorus and assembled women to pray to the Olympian gods and goddesses, to the Pythian ones, to the Delian ones and to the other gods."[8]

If, then, the invocation of all the gods undoubtedly is a standard element of more extended invocations, the modern observer might well

---

[5] "The other gods" are here defined in a restricted sense as the co-inhabitants of the city and land, as the group was in the inscription of Kolophon. A variant can be found in Herod. *Mimiambus* 4 (Furley & Bremer 2001, no. 6.6): a prayer to a series of healer gods whose statues are addressed and which ends "and all the gods who share your residence and goddesses, father Paieon." In reversed order in Thuc. 4.97.4: ἐπικαλουμένους τοὺς ὁμωχέτας δαίμονας καὶ τὸν Ἀπόλλω, translated by Hornblower *a.l.* as: "….Apollo and all the other deities worshipped in the temple." However, the great majority of our testimonies refer to "(and) all gods and goddesses" without any restriction.

[6] In this period we also find exceptionally "all the gods" not in addition but as a summary of a preceding list of individual gods. A late hymn to 'all the gods' from Epidauros exhorts people to invoke (καλεῖτε) Dionysos, Asklepios, the Dioskouroi, the Charites, the Mousai, the Moirai, the Sun and the Moon, followed by: "Hail you, all the gods who live forever and the immortal goddesses: protect this temple…": *IG* IV^2 1.129; *PMG* 937; R. Wagman, *Inni di Epidauro* (Pisa 1995) 51–67; Furley & Bremer 2001, no. 6.7. The inscription dates from the late third c. AD but the text may be earlier. Do 7th century Christian invocations of the type "In the name of Jesus Christ, our God and Saviour, and of our Lady, the holy Mother of God and Virgin Maria, *and of all Saints* (καὶ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων)" betray some formulaic influence of the pagan formula? See for these formulas: R.S. Bagnall & K.A. Worp, Christian Invocations in the Papyri, *CdE* 56 (1981) 112–133, formula 4B; A.B.J. Sirks & K.A. Worp, "Tres faciunt collegium," *ZPE* 104 (1994) 256–260. On such type of continuity see: M. Wallraff, Pantheon und Allerheiligen: Einheit und Vielfalt des Göttlichen in der Spätantike, *JAuC* 47 (2004) 128–143.

[7] "Abgesehen von diesen Gottheiten werden zum Abschluss der Götterlisten generell alle Götter und Göttinnen angerufen:" Chaniotis 1996, 71, who (n. 389) also gives instances in non-Cretan oath texts. Cf. Jacobi 1930, 20–25; *Staatsverträge* 3, nos. 429, 463, 468, 481, 492, 499, 553; Barré 1983, 18.

[8] Cf. the variant μὰ τὴν Δήμητρα, μὰ τὸν Ἀσκλήπιον, μὰ τοὺς θεούς (Men. *Dys.* 666) and for another text from a comedy see below.

wonder why the Greeks did not take a shortcut and pray solely, simply and consistently to 'all the Gods'. This would circumvent both the vexed question of choice and the ever lurking risk of omitting one of the gods, with its well-known fatal consequences, as damaging to the offender as conducive to literary production. This question requires that we first enquire whether Greeks indeed did never pray to 'all the gods' in isolation, i.e. not as a postscript added to a list of individual gods, but as an independent divine collective.

It has often been suggested that formulae referring to 'all the gods' (πάντες θεοί) in isolation, though already prevailing in Mycenaean texts[9] and occasionally in Homer (*Od.* 11.132–4; 14.423; cf. 4.478–9), seem to fade away in classical texts of the Greek mainland,[10] only to re-emerge in post-classical times. However, they do occur in 5th and 4th century authors—as we already saw in the prayer "to all the birds" in Aristophanes—again especially in oath and prayer formulas: "I swear by all gods and goddesses" (ὀμνύω θεοὺς πάντας καὶ πάσας, Xen. *Anab.* 6.1.31; 7.6.18); "I pray to all gods and goddesses" (εὔχομαι τοῖς θεοῖς πᾶσι καὶ πάσαις: Aeschin. 1.116; Dem. 18.1).[11] On the borderline between the Classical and the Hellenistic periods stands Men. *Kolax* fr. 1 (Athen. 14.659D), where a *mageiros* (assistant butcher/cook at sacrifices) says "let us pray now to all the Olympian gods and goddesses" (θεοῖς Ὀλυμπίοις εὐχώμεθα Ὀλυμπίασι, πᾶσι πάσαις), obviously alluding to a customary formula, but to be handled with care since the humor may be sought in the misplaced highly ceremonious address in a context of a modest private sacrifice.[12]

---

[9] In Lineair B texts we find 15 dedications *pasiteoi* always written in one word and all from Knossos. See: L.R. Palmer, *Mycenaean Greek Texts* (Oxford 1963) 236; M. Gérard-Rousseau, *Les mentions religieuses dans les tablettes Myceniennes* (Rome 1968) 170 f.

[10] We do not know for sure if the altar for the collective of all the gods reported by Paus. 5.15.1 in the workshop of Pheidias (ἔστιν οὖν βωμὸς ἐν τῷ οἰκήματι θεοῖς πᾶσιν ἐν κοινῷ) and another at 5.14.8 can be dated to the classical period.

[11] See the evidence in Pötscher 2000, 39 f.

[12] Its solemnity is also crushed by the immediately following interruption (one out of many) with the order to the slave "to hand him the tongue on a plate" (a delicacy that the cook keeps for himself). See: M. Krieter-Spiro, *Sklaven, Köche und Hetären. Das Dienstpersonal bei Menander* (Stuttgart 1997) 70: "Komisch wirkt nun, dass der Koch diese Formeln ständig unterbricht" and who speaks of "Mangelnde religiöse Konzentration." The prayer situation is very comparable with the mildly ironic 4th Mimiambus of Herodas, where an impressive cast of healer gods are invoked but in the end must content themselves with a modest cockerel, which the sacrificing woman

However, *cults* of, as well as dedications and sacrifices to 'all the gods' seem to be lacking in the classical period. It is only in the imperial period that cults of 'all the gods' come to bloom in mainland Greece as everywhere else: Hadrian built a temple for them in Athens (Paus. 1.18.9) and there are several dedications to 'all the gods'.[13] Pausanias mentions numerous cults and sanctuaries of 'All the Gods'.[14] Beyond mainland Greece, however, cults of 'all the gods' are attested for earlier times as well:[15] at Kydonia (Chania) as early as the fourth century BC,[16] in Sicilia in the 2nd and 1st c. BC.[17]

Not an overwhelming result. Apparently, addressing a collective of 'all the gods' was not a particular Greek bent. So this is the moment to return to our earlier question: why not? Let us see. An inscription from the Asklepieion at Pergamum[18] running: "to the other gods and to Asklepios the Saviour and to Emperor Traianos" (τοῖς τε ἄλλοις θεοῖς καὶ Ἀσκληπίῳ καὶ αὐτοκράτορι Καίσαρι Τραίανῳ) is unusual, but only in that the order of the customary formula is reversed. By an anticipatory strategy with 'the other gods', it puts the two named gods, who do *not* belong to 'the other gods', in the limelight. "We

---

appropriately characterizes as ἐπίδορπα 'side-dish'. Playing with hungry gods and sacrificial stinginess is a cherished joke in comedy, as we have seen.

[13] J.H. Oliver, *Hesperia* 10 (1941) 255 no. 60; *IG* II^2 2802, 2934. An oracle response (c. 200 AD, *SGO* I 84–5 no. 01/19/06; Busine 2005, 450 no. 32) from Didyme: 'you should honour and revere all the immortals' (πάντας χρὴ τειμᾶν μάκαρας πάντας τε σέβεσθαι. A curious dedication θεοῖς τοῖς πανταχοῦ (Chr. Habicht, *Inschr. des Asklepieions* no. 133) is as far as I know unique. It is no doubt to be understood against the background of "eine alle Einzelgötter in sich aufnehmende Allgottheit," characteristic of that period: Habicht *ibid.* p. 12. Cf. *GGR* II, 569 ff. Even more enigmatic is an inscription on an altar with two Panes dedicated to the Mother of the Gods with the addition: πάντα θεὸν σεμνύνομεν (*Syll.*^{3} 1153, where see the discussion).

[14] See the survey in Pirenne-Delforge 1998, 138 n. 47; 2008, 259, n. 80.

[15] Ch. Kantzia, "Ένα ἀσυνήθιστο πολεμικὸ ἀνάθημα στὸ ἱερὸ τῆς ὁδοῦ Διαγοριδῶν στὴ Ρόδο", in *Ρόδος 2.400 χρόνια. Ἡ πόλη τῆς Ρόδου ἀπὸ τὴν ἱδρυσή της μέχρι τὴν κατάληψη ἀπὸ τοὺς Τούρκους (1523). Διεθνὲς ἐπιστημονικὸ συνέδριο, Ρόδος, 24–29 Ὀκτωβρίου 1993. Πρακτικά*, (Athens 1999) 75–82, reports the discovery of 900 stone bullets (from the siege of Demetrios Poliorketes?) in a sanctuary at Rhodes which was probably used for the dedication of war booty. In the light of a dedication to the Theoi (*SEG* 39.732), she tentatively identifies it with the sanctuary of Pantes Theoi. For the cult of Pantes Theoi in Rhodes see also W.-D. Heilmeyer, "*Θεοῖς Πᾶσι—Rhodos, Pergamon und Rom*," *ibid.*, pp. 83–88. I owe this information to A. Chaniotis, EBGR 1999 no. 120.

[16] H. van Effenterre *et alii*, Base inscrite de Kydonia, *BCH* 107 (1983) 405–419, espec. 414, mentioning a "priest of all the gods" (= *CEG* 2 no. 846).

[17] G. Scibona, *Kokalos* 17 (1971) 3–20, espec. 5–14, publishes three dedications to θεοῖς πᾶσι from Halaisa (Sicilia), "di buona età ellenistica" (second and first c. BC).

[18] Chr. Habicht, *Inschriften des Asklepieions*, no. 64.

pray (….) to all the gods but mostly to Dionysos" (πρὸς πάντας τοὺς θεοὺς μάλιστα δὲ πρὸς τὸν Διόνυσον) we read in an inscription from Asia Minor.[19] Here, the most important god included in the aforementioned collective of all the gods is singled out for special attention. Another text with a comparable composition is an early (5th c. BC) inscription from Selinous[20] which reads:

> The Selinuntians are victorious thanks to the following gods: Zeus[21] and Phobos (Panic)[22] and Herakles and Apollon and Poseidon and the Tyndarides and Athena and Malophoros (Demeter) and Pasikrateia *and the other gods*,[23] but most of all Zeus (καὶ δι[ὰ] τὸς ἄλλος θεός, [δ]ιὰ δὲ Δία μάλιστ[α]).[24] That is why we dedicate phialai and write all the names of the gods but the name of Zeus first.

In a different fashion we see the same in the case of the priest 'of all the gods' at Kydonia, in the inscription just mentioned, who dedicated his monument to Apollo, Artemis and Leto. Although it was his task to entertain the cult for all the gods (already for the third year, he writes), this did not prevent him from individuating other gods from this collective for specific worship. One may regard this observation as banal and take it for granted (= ignore it) *or* one can further reflect

---

[19] Ph. Le Bas & W.H. Waddington, *Voyage archéologique en Grèce et Asie Mineure* III, 75, 80.

[20] *IG* XIV 268; *Syll.*[3] 1122; Jacobi 1930, p. 6 no. 2; R. Arena, *Iscrizioni greche arcaiche di Sicilia e Magna Grecia* I *Megara Iblea e Selinunte* (Milano 1989) no. 53. On this inscription see: W. Calder III, *The Inscription from Temple G at Selinus* (*GRB* Monographs 4, 1963); D. Musti, L'iscrizione del tempio G di Selinunte, *RFIC* 113 (1985) 134–157 and 443 ff.; A. Brugnone, L'iscrizione del tempio G di Selinunte e le tradizioni sui responsi oracolari Delfici, in: *Sicilia Epigrafica, ASNP* Ser IV, Quaderni 1 (Pisa 1999) 129–139.

[21] This Zeus is certainly not to be identified with the Sicilian Meilichios here: E. Manni, Da Megara Iblea a Selinunte: le divinità, *Kokalos* 21 (1975) 174–195, espec. 184.

[22] On the prominent place and the nature of Phobos here see: M.-M. Mactoux, Phobos à Sparte, *RHR* 210 (1993) 259–304.

[23] It has been suggested that these other gods should be a reference to the rest of the "twelve gods" (as also worshipped in other Sicilian cities) who are not explicitly mentioned in this inscription (so Pareti, followed by Manni *o.c.* [above n. 21] 178 ff.). However, this is, in view of its general formulaic nature, highly unlikely as G. Pugliese Carratelli argues in *ΑΠΑΡΧΑΙ in onore di P.E. Arias* (Pisa 1982) 191. Moreover, Brugnoni *o.c.* (above n.20) has argued convincingly for a Delphic oracular instruction concerning the gods, which makes local initiatives even less probable.

[24] Of a different nature is the addition "and to the city" in V. Petrakos, Μεσσήνη, *Ergon* (2003) 30–47 (EBGR 2003, 130): a dedication by Damophon and his sons to "Zeus, all the gods, and the city" (Δαμοφῶν Φιλίππο[υ] καὶ οἱ υἱοὶ | τὰ ἀκρωτήρια ἀνέ[θηκαν Διὶ θε]οῖς τε πᾶσι καὶ [τᾶι] | πόλει).

on its theological implications. In accordance with a motto introduced earlier in this book in, viz. to try to make the banal interesting, I prefer the latter course of action.[25]

So far the texts discussed are expressions of a special preference for one or a few gods *among* the collective of all the gods.[26] Pausanias frequently uses a μάλιστα θεῶν formula when indicating which god is locally honoured most of all.[27] There is nothing disquieting about all this, but the common constitution of these texts is interesting: they give the impression that although the option of a comprehensive prayer to all the gods is within reach—even tried out—, the preference for one or a few named gods yet manifests itself in a postscript of sorts.

And so they pave the way to another strategy. Just one step further goes a prayer in Dem. 18.141:

> I invoke before you, men of Athens, all the gods and goddesses who possess the land of Attica and Pythian Apollo, who is the ancestral god of the city…(ὅσοι τὴν χώραν ἔχουσι τὴν Ἀττικήν, καὶ τὸν Ἀπόλλω τὸν Πύθιον, ὃς πατρῷός ἐστι τῇ πόλει).

As in the text quoted earlier at p. 501, this passage restricts 'all the gods' to those of Attica, which of course includes Athens, but Apollo is added.[28] The text leads to two interesting observations. First, Apollo is simultaneously identified as the Pythian Delphic one and the Apollo Patroios that we already met as the typical ancestor god of the Athenians.[29] The first identification in the present context was convenient for thematical reasons,[30] the latter emphatically underlines his genuine Athenian 'nationality'. Consequently, the second interesting—even surprising—thing is that despite his explicit inclusion in the group of all Athenian *poliouchoi theoi*, he is mentioned separately—in a post-

---

[25] The Roman who made the dedication *Dis deabusque quos ius fasque est precari in Pantheo* (circa 200 AD, *AE* 1968 227, where it is argued that this *pantheo* does not indicate a building but a general religious notion of 'all the gods') at least betrayed concern about the problem.

[26] Cf. Babr. 10: An ox-driver who lost his wagon in a ravine invoked "Herakles the only one among all the gods whom he really worshipped and honoured" (τῷ δ' Ἡρακλεῖ προσηύχεθ', ὃν μόνον πάντων θεῶν ἀληθῶς προσεκύνει τε κἀτίμα). Cf. above Ch. I n. 410.

[27] Pirenne-Delforge 1998, 139 f.; 2008, 262 f.

[28] "Die Einengung von den meistens angerufenen πάντες θεοί auf die πολιοῦχοι θεοί bereitet die Hervorhebung Apollons vor:" H. Wankel, *Demosthenes. Rede für Ktesiphon über den Kranz* (Heidelberg 1976) *a.l.*

[29] We have seen exactly the same 'strategy' in the oracle of Klaros above (p. 74 f.).

[30] See the extensive note of Wankel, *o.c.* (above n. 28).

script so to speak. This time, however, not in terms of 'and most of all' or 'and especially', but just as if he did not belong to the collective at all. In short, depending on the perspective, Apollo Pythios (here equated with Apollo Patroios) *belongs and does not belong* to 'all the gods of Attika'.

Whoever may find this 'nonsense,' or at least an instance of over-interpretation, is kindly requested to read the next section on the 'Twelve Gods' before passing judgement.[31] For the moment we may conclude that, apparently, even if and as far as collectives are good to *think*, they are not so good *to live by*.[32] This even goes so far that gods, though included in the collective of all the gods, still duck out of it, not by way of excelling *among*, but *as standing apart* from the collective. This is even more striking in the case of a collective that flourished in the archaic and classical periods and is well known to everybody from myth: the collective of 'the twelve gods'.

2. *The Twelve Gods*

According to Paus. 7.22.4, at Pharai (Achaia), around the image of Hermes "stand about thirty square stones: these the people of Pharai revere, giving each stone the name of a god." Pritchett 1998, 130 comments: "Perhaps the thirty images at Pharai represented a pantheon of the deities of the town."[33] In Thessalian Pherai a curious altar with the names of six goddesses was found, ingeniously reconstructed by

[31] Interesting in this respect are two inscriptions of the imperial era. The first, *IG* IX 2, 1201 from Methone (Magnesia): "the one who will violate this grave will have the following gods in rage: the King, greatest god, almighty, founder of all things, καὶ θεοὺς πάντας καὶ θεοὺς ἥρωας καὶ αὐτὴν τὴν Δέσποιναν Βασιλίδα"; the second, a Roman dedication (*CIL* III 10425, *ILS* 3020) *I.O.M. Depulsori et diis deabusque omnibus et Genio Loci*. In both cases the postscript position of a god already included in the preceding 'all the gods' is obvious. Just like Apollo Pythios in the passage just discussed, here the Lady of the Underworld herself and the Genius Loci merited an additional separate mention since the context requires their special attention.

[32] Note that already the Mycenaean *pasiteoi* are sometimes accompanied by individual gods: Gérard-Rousseau *o.c.* (above n. 9) 171.

[33] As St. Miller, The Altars of the Six Goddesses in Thessalian Pherai, *CSCA* 7 (1974) 231–256, espec. 247, points out, some thirty of these square stones have been found in Arcadia, mostly from Tegea. H. Williams & G. Schaus, The Sanctuary of Athena at Ancient Stymphalos, in: Deacy & Villing 2001, 90 n. 56, present an extensive bibliography.

St. Miller[34] with the heads of these goddesses found separately. Thirty and six as totals of divine collectives are exceptions.[35] But one number is not.

Ethology and cognitive psychology have shown that the ideal number to warrant the necessary variety of perspectives on the one hand and the convenient arrangement or surveyability of the total picture on the other lies somewhere in between ten and twenty. Not by chance is 11 or 12 the preferred numbers for group sports.[36] Or in the words of the late antique philosopher Hermeias:[37] "completeness is in the Twelve." So it is not surprising that the major Greek gods could be comprised in groups of twelve,[38] and that cults of twelve gods are in evidence for a number of Greek cities,[39] including Thasos, Delos, Kos, Olympia, and Athens, where an altar of the twelve gods was founded by the younger Peisistratos at the agora circa 520 BC.[40] This does not

---

[34] Long 1987, 30; Miller *o.c.* (preceding note). A head of a goddess, found later at the same place, confirms his reconstruction: E.Ch. Kakavogiannis, Κεφάλι μαρμάρινου αγάλματος Θεάς από τις Φερές της Θεσσαλίας, *ΥΠΕΡΕΙΑ* 2 (1992) 61–78. I am indebted to Stephen Miller for drawing my attention to this group of gods and putting the latter publication at my disposal.

[35] See: C. Picard, Les 'agoras de dieux' en Grèce, *BSA* 46 (1951) 132–142, with much evidence for the worship of collective groups of gods.

[36] N. Luhmann, *Funktion der Religion* (Frankfurt 1977) 89–93; 110 f.; 129, espec. 126 ff. with further literature; L. Tiger & R. Fox, *Das Herrentier* (Munich 1976) 75 ff.

[37] *In Platonis Phaedrum scholia* (ed. P. Couvreur, Paris 1901) 139.

[38] Burkert 1985, 218, where see the discussion of twelve as ideal number, on which I am leaning heavily for the present passage.

[39] On Twelve Gods still fundamental: O. Weinreich, Zwölfgötter, *RML* VI (1924–7) 764–848. Further: K.P. Wachsmuth, Zwölfgötter, *Kleine Pauly* 5 (1975) 1567 ff.; Long 1987; Jost 1992, 16; Georgoudi 1996 and 1998. For a brief introduction see: Sineux 2006, 49–53. For a survey of the cults of the Twelve Gods mentioned by Pausanias see: Pirenne-Delforge 1998, 138 n.47. On imagery: H. Knell, *Die Darstellung der Götterversammlung in der attischen Kunst des VI. u. V. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.* (Freiburg 1965); G. Berger-Doer, Dodekatheoi, in: *LIMC* III, 646–658; G. Güntner, *Göttervereine und Götterversammlungen auf attischen Weihreliefs. Untersuchungen zur Typologie und Bedeutung* (Würzburg 1994). Laurens & Lissarrague 1990 discuss a number of series of gods in image and vase painting and show that the compositions of total groups and of pairs within these groups betray a remarkable variety.

[40] Testimonia: Long 1987, 62–77; S. Angiolillo, Hestia, l'edificio F e altare dei 12 Dei ad Atene, *Ostraka* 1 (1992) 171–176; L.M. Gadberg, The Sanctuary of the Twelve Gods in the Athenian Agora, *Hesperia* 61 (1992) 447–489. In Athens as wel as elsewhere the twelve gods were especially popular as oath gods. R. Nünlist, *ZPE* 99 (1993) 250, mentions a number of formulas such as μὰ τοὺς δώδεκα θεούς in Attic comedy and Menander and adds that even today (or was it yesterday? None of my Greek acquaintances had ever heard the expression) Greeks swear by the twelve gods.

imply uniformity in the composition of these groups.[41] Eudoxos of Knidos (IVa) gives the 'canonical' list: Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Demeter, Apollo, Artemis, Ares, Aphrodite, Hermes, Athena, Hephaistos and Hestia,[42] but the constitution of the one at Olympia is very different—moreover divided into six couples—: Zeus Olympios, Poseidon, Hera, Athena, Hermes, Apollo, the Charites, Dionysos, Artemis, the Alphaeus, Kronos and Rhea.[43] At Delos there may have been four altars, each for three gods.[44]

No doubt, like the concept of 'All the gods', the notion of 'the Twelve Gods' should be seen as a rudimentary attempt to organize (at least an important section of) an extremely pluralistic pantheon into one all-encompassing unity.[45] The interesting thing is that in the ambience of Greek cult it did not smoothly work out that way. Or, to put it more strongly, instead of contributing to the solution of the problem of multiplicity, it rather creates another, at least in the eyes of the modern observer.

In a dedication from Athens of the early 4th century BC (*IG* II^2 4564) we read "to the Twelve Gods and to Agathe Tuche" (τοῖς δώδεκα θεοῖς καὶ τῇ Ἀγαθῇ Τύχῃ). So far, nothing to worry about. Agathe Tuche had only recently been raised to the rank of gods[46] and (hence) was not a member to the club of the twelve great gods.[47] In a decree from

---

[41] Georgoudi 1996 is of fundamental importance for her questioning one 'canonical' list of the twelve, which in her view does not exist at all but has been invented by Weinreich.

[42] Scholion Apoll. Rhod. *Arg.* 2.531–2 (*FGrHist* I [1923] no. 31 Fr 47) substitutes Ares for Hades. The Romans (naturally) preferred the first version, witness Ennius 62 V. Iuno Vesta Minerva Ceres Diana Venus Mars / Mercurius Iovis Neptunus Vulcanus Apollo. In the Roman period the number of twelve gods was so stereotyped that Christian authors amply poked fun at it: B. Kytzler, Zwölfgötterspott: Minucius Felix Octavus 25.8, in: Chr. Neumeister (ed.), *Antike Texte in Forschung und Schule. Festschr. W. Heilmann* (Frankfurt 1993) 167–171.

[43] Testimonia in Long 1987, 58–62.

[44] If we may go by the mention of one altar for Athena, Zeus and Hera in the Dodekatheon: *I.Delos* no. 2471.

[45] Georgoudi 1998, 76, calls it "un mini-panthéon grec, une sorte de panthéon condensé."

[46] In fact this inscription belongs to her earliest attestations: M.B. Walbank, A *Lex sacra* of the State and the Deme of Kollytos, *Hesperia* 63 (1994) 233–239; S.V. Tracy, *IG* II^2 1195 and the Cult of Agathe Tuche in Attica, *Hesperia* 63 (1994) 241–244. On another new god added to the twelve, see: F. Queyrel, La fonction du Grand Autel de Pergame, *REG* 115 (2002) 561–590, who argues that the altar was dedicated to the twelve gods and Eumenes II.

[47] But one might presume that right from her birth she did belong to 'all the gods'. Yet two oracular inscriptions from Didyma clarify how material elements may produce

Mytilene of about 330 BC,[48] complications emerge. The Council and the People make a vow to

> the Twelve Gods and to Zeus Heraios and Zeus King and Zeus of Concord, and to Concord and to Justice and to Accomplishment of All Good Things (τ[ο]ῖς θεοῖσι τοῖς δυοκαίδεκα καὶ τῶι Διὶ τῶι Ἡραίωι καὶ Βασίληι καὶ Ὁμονοίωι καὶ τᾶι Ὁμονοίαι καὶ Δίκαι καὶ Ἐπιτελείαι τῶν ἀγάθων).

The text provides an ideal summary of the variety of complications in Greek polytheism that we have discovered so far and leads us to another. First, what I, following the first editors, rendered as "Zeus Heraios and Zeus King and Zeus of Concord" is in the text literally worded as "Zeus Heraios and King and of Concord." The fact that the name Zeus is omitted in the latter two addressees might suggest that here one Zeus with three different epithets is intended. Yet, we know that three different cults and locations are concerned. Earlier (p. 114) we discussed one of them, Zeus Heraios and his specific nature. Further, it is remarkable that two Concords are mentioned in the inscription, one used as an epithet of Zeus, the other as a separate personification.[49] All these 'curiosa' however are not our present concern.[50]

The *new* complication is hidden in the phrase "to the twelve gods *and* Zeus Heraios etc." This strikes the modern observer as curious, to say the least. *How* curious is glaringly illustrated by the translation given by the editors: "to the twelve gods and *especially* to Zeus Heraios

---

complications. One (*I.Didyma* 499, *SGO* I 01/19/06. Ca. 200 AD) has the question whether the treasurer should transpose the altar of Tyche from Apollo's garden to the altar of All Gods. The other (*I.Didyma* 504, *SGO* I 01/19/08. Ca. 300 AD) the question whether an altar for Soteira-Kore should be built *within* the altar of All Gods.

[48] A.J. Heisserer & R. Hodot, The Mytilenean Decree on Concord, *ZPE* 63 (1986) 109–119.

[49] On these Homonoia and Homonoios see: G. Thériault, L'apparition du culte d'Homonoia, *LEC* 64 (1996) 127–150, espec. 147 ff.; *idem, Le culte d'Homonoia dans les cités grecques* (Lyon-Québec 1996) 19 f., admitting that beyond the circumstances (return of exiled persons and restoration of democracy) there is no further evidence concerning these cults. Recent attestation of a cult of Homonoia at Kos: D. Bosnakis & Kl. Hallof, Alte und neue Inschriften aus Kos II, *Chiron* 35 (2005) 219–272, espec. 240–243; cf. M. Livadiotti & G. Rocco, Il santuario di Asklepios, Hygieia e Homonoia nel demo di Isthmos a Coo, in: J.-Y. Marc & J.-Ch. Moretti (edd.), *Constructions publiques et programmes édilitaires en Grèce entre le II^e^ siècle av. J.-C. et le I^e^ s. ap. J.-C.* (*BCH* Suppl. 39, Athens 2001) 371–384.

[50] I will be completely silent on "Accomplishment of all good things" a personified abstract meaning "The Bringer of Blessings." See: Heisserer & Hodot, *o.c.* (above n. 49) 112 f.

etc.," which seems to imply that they take these gods, albeit listed separately, as actually being included in the collective of the twelve gods, as one might expect of a god with the name Zeus. However, if Greeks wished to express the notion 'and especially' they were perfectly able to do so, as we have seen them doing most explicitly in the Selinous inscription: "and the other gods, but most of all (μάλιστα δὲ) Zeus." Zeus Heraios, for that matter, is indeed to be distinguished from the Olympian Zeus, as we have seen.

In other texts of this type, however, the situation is unnegotiably paradoxical. *IG* II² 112 (Athens 362 BC) has: Διὶ τῷ Ὀλυμπίῳ καὶ τῇ Ἀθηνᾶι τῇ Πολιάδι καὶ τῇ Δήμητρι καὶ τῇ Κόρῃ καὶ τοῖς δώδεκα [θ]εοῖς καὶ ταῖς Σεμναῖς θεαῖς. We translate: "to Zeus Olympios and to Athena Polias and to Demeter and Kore and to the Twelve Gods [not, of course: *and especially* to the Twelve Gods] and to the Semnai Theai."[51] This inscription speaks volumes. Zeus most certainly belongs to the—indeed to any—group of Twelve Gods, as do Athena[52] and mostly also Demeter. Have their different epithets altered their fingerprints, thus disqualifying them for membership?[53] As I hope to have shown in the first chapter, such an explanation should not be excluded. However, Demeter does *not* have an epithet and Zeus Olympios is without any doubt the sovereign god and just as evidently belongs to the twelve.[54] One may hesitate in the case of the priest of "Delian Apollo and Zeus Polieus and Athena and the Twelve Gods"

---

[51] Cf. *IG* II.1.57 τοῖς δώδεκα θ[εοῖς καὶ ταῖς Σεμναῖς θεαῖ]ς καὶ τῶι Ἡρακλεῖ. Note incidentally that the Semnai Theai (the august goddesses) need not *always* be identified as Demeter and Kore, as they often are. On the Semnai in Athens see: Mikalson 1991, 214–217.

[52] Our sources tell us that Praxiteles made an Athena for the group of twelve gods in the temple of Artemis Soteira at Megara. Such a group with a clearly Praxitelean Athena has been found at Ostia: G. Becatti, Un dodekatheon Ostiense e l'arte di Prassitele, *ASAA* NS 1–2 (1939–40) 85–137.

[53] Apparently not in the eyes of the following scholars, who all have noticed the 'inconsistency'. Weinreich *RML* VI 780, on *IG* II² 112 just quoted: "obwohl die vorher genannten doch dazu hören," with some notes on this type of over-abundance in his *Lykische Zwölfgötterreliefs* (*o.c.* below n. 61) 20 f.; H. Herter, Olumpioi Theoi, *RE* 18.1.229: "Nach der Gesamtheit der O. konnten auch noch einzelne Gottheiten *besonders* angerufen werden, auch wenn diese selber zu den O. gehörten" (my italics). Georgoudi 1998, 78, while recognizing the import of the epithets, nonetheless writes that the Twelve Gods "sont associés, encore une fois, à Zeus, membre par ailleurs éminent de cet ensemble divin."

[54] This does not mean that the twelve should always consist of 'Olympian' gods or ever be qualified as Olympians. Cf. Weinreich *RML* VI 835: "die Olympier πάντες καὶ πᾶσαι sind eben nicht die δώδεκα." Cf. Herter, *l.c.* preceding note.

at Kos.[55] As you can see from his epithet, Zeus Polieus is the local Zeus, protector of the *polis*, but Athena lacks an epithet. However, another inscription from Kos presents a priestess "of Asklepios, Epiona and Rhea and the Twelve [Gods and Zeus] Polieus and Athena Polias."[56] Is the unqualified Athena of the first the same as the Athena Polias of the second inscription? If so, it remains noteworthy that she can do without that epithet and hence apply for membership of the twelve.[57]

The new complication announced above, in other words, is that the divine collective, though naturally understood as the sum total of the twelve great gods (or of some great gods *and* some great local gods) in the cultic evidence (vows, sacrifices, prayer) appears to have acquired a separate and independent identity side by side with individual gods.[58]

Apparently, once having come into being (or having been copied from Oriental models), the *Dodeka* gained a cultic independence which made the twelve individual constituents fade from human awareness.[59] This made it possible to combine the *Dodeka* with other individual personal 'ones'. That a priest of the Twelve Gods makes sacrifices to individual gods within or without the twelve[60] is not surprising.[61] But

---

[55] *I.Cos* no. 125 (1st c. BC); Long 1987, 93. The cult and priest of the twelve held a central position at Kos.

[56] A. Maiuri, *Nuova Silloge Epigrafica di Rodi e Cos* (Florence 1925) no. 460 (1st c. AD). For more evidence see Georgoudi 1998, 79. Two inscriptions from Heraklion (*ICret.* III nos. III 9 and 10) have dedications to Apollo Dekataphoros and the twelve gods and Athena Polias.

[57] Other combinations of important gods of the city with the twelve occur at Megara, Magnesia on the Maeander (Long 1987, 83 and 53), and, in a different way, Thasos: Georgoudi 1998, 80.

[58] The same in a Latin curse from Rom (*CIL* VI 13740 = *ILS* 8202): *Qui hic mixerit aut cacarit Duodecim deos et Deanam et Iovem Optimum Maximum habeat iratos*. I find it hard to avoid the impression that in this specific context the expression has a touch of humor in it. Especially in these curses 'the gods' as a general collective are often invoked, in both Greek and Latin texts. See: Versnel 1985, 258–262.

[59] This again changes the moment that images of (the) twelve gods are being carried around in procession and set up in a structure erected for their entertainment, as reported for Magnesia on the Maiandros (*Syll.*[3] 589).

[60] As e.g. in *LSAM* no. 2; *LSCG* no. 151; 156A.

[61] Nor is it—or only for different reasons—that King Philippos II added his own statue as 'thirteenth god' to those of the twelve. Diod. Sic. 16.92.5 and 95.1. And cf. Alexander the Great in the same position: Lucian. *Dial. Mort.* 13.2. See Ch. VI for a discussion. I pass over in silence the famous Lycian reliefs with twelve gods that often have a thirteenth principal god in their midst since they are unique to this region. See: O. Weinreich, *Lykische Zwölfgötterreliefs. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des dreizehnten Gottes*, *SB Heidelberg* 4 Abh 5 (1913); *idem* 1916. Perhaps they are even restricted to one sanctuary at Tomba: Robert 1987, 431–437. See more recently: Th. Drew-Bear

that one can be priest(ess) of, or make sacrifices simultaneously to, the twelve *and* to other gods who yet belong to the twelve is a phenomenon that has been noticed sometimes in passing but that, in my perspective, deserves being put in the limelight for once. Just as in the case of the very same peculiarity of 'All the Gods',[62] to take this phenomenon for granted would rob us from an opportunity to discover one more hint of a typically Greek strategy in coping with their many gods. This remarkable feature of a total not replacing but being added to individual gods was a central issue in Chapter III.

I may not close this section without lauding the one scholar who has not only acknowledged but also tried to gain insight into the meaning of the phenomenon. At the end of her paper of 1996, 78, Georgoudi made a quick note that "however paradoxical or abnormal it may seem, it appears that some of those individual gods [viz. that are mentioned together with the twelve in the inscriptions] are at the same time members of the twelve."[63] In 1998 she investigated the nature of those additional gods,[64] and found that they sometimes were connected with concord, justice and harmony (as were the twelve) and/or belonged to the most important city gods, "centre de la dévotion civique," "divinités protrectrices et salvatrices." In her final part she summarizes her argument as follows (in my translation):

> Some of those individual deities are simultaneously presented as members of that ensemble, which, at first sight, might seem strange, if not

---

& G. Labarre, Une dédicace aux Douze Dieux lyciens et la question de leur origine, in: G. Labarre *et alii* (edd.), *Les cultes locaux dans le monde grec et romain. Acte du colloque de Lyon 2001* (Lyon 2004) 81–101. Even here, however, the same inconsistences may turn up. So for instance in a recently discovered stele (M.H. Sayar, Two Steles Dedicated to the Twelve Gods, *Palmet* 5 [2004] 65–68). It represents in the upper panel 12 gods flanking a central figure, in the lower panel 12 dogs flanking a central figure (Artemis?). Its inscription tell us that the stele was dedicated to the 12 Gods, and Artemis Kynegetis, and Hermes upon command (2nd/3rd cent. AD). The Twelve Gods are conceived here as hunters.

[62] A combination of the Twelve gods, All the gods and individual gods in Y. Akkan & H. Malay, The Village Tar(i)gye and the Cult of Zeus Tar(i)gyenos in the Cayster Valley", *EA* 40 (2007) pp. 16–22. A priestess, Herodiane, narrates the ritual services that she had provided: "She performed the rite of purification and sacrificed for [the] Twelve Gods and organised a one-day Kaisarion. (….) And she became legitimate priestess of Hera and Zeus and of all the gods and performed the rite of purification for all the gods and spent money on all of them."

[63] My translation. And *ibid.* "Mais en même temps ces divinités, que l'on voit séparées de leurs pairs, font partie intégrante de ce groupe, elles se trouvent aussi au-dedans de cette totalité."

[64] Also that of the mythical founders or companions of 'the twelve'.

> abnormal. In fact, these deities seem to have the ability to act on two levels: as members of the Twelve Gods, they participate in the reinforcement of that divine totality, they 'dynamize' its global action, and contribute in lending a coherent, harmonious, consonant image to that ensemble. But they can also, in certain cultic contexts, jump out of the group and affirm a more personal presence, while no less remaining in close association with their peers. In these cases, the deities usually have an epithet, an epiclesis, which qualifies them, which circumscribes their specific mode of intervention, which defines the function with which they are invested in the frame of a community. Whether within or without the Twelve Gods, these divine powers coordinate their actions in order that they develop, both collectively and individually, in a fashion that is effective and profitable for the human world.

I set my eyes to this article only after I had written the first version of the present appendix. Georgoudi is interested in how and within what frame the cooperation between twelve and both inclusive and exclusive individual gods worked. My concern is the availability and, indeed, the prevalence of this remarkable phenomenon as well as its implications for the nature of polytheism. The difference between our approaches is best illustrated by Georgoudi's emphasis on the epithet as a tool to qualify a traditional member of the twelve into a (slightly) different deity and thus explain his double identity within and without the group, while I would focus on the god without any qualification. It is the very same god, who though rightfully belonging to the twelve yet ducks out of the collective and stands alone and independent. Also for this reason I have largely preserved the original form of my argument. But I emphatically refer the reader to the important studies of Georgoudi for a more detailed exposition of the evidence and an insightful treatment.

We conclude that grouping, in grand totals of 'all' or 'twelve', if viewed as a system of creating order, turns out to be of only limited use and effect. Both appear here to be intrinsically inconsistent with other sections of the Greek religious system and to generate internal tensions. Gods duck out time and again. Why? A situation of great solemnity (oaths, promises, treaties) may require the ceremonious presence of a collective of gods. The more the better. But situations of great tension, fear or need just as naturally require the assistance of identifiable individual and powerful gods who then emerge, not from, but side by side with the collective. Two motives may play a role here: either specialization, as Georgoudi argues, or nearness and recognizability. Corollary to their autonomy and their specific identity as a col-

lective, the groups tend to lose their direct connection with individual gods. This entails a sense of anonymity: different from individual gods, the collectives under discussion are nameless. The major function of name giving is social integration—the incorporation of the named into one's own cultural sphere.[65] Anonymity may either indicate that the anonymous person does not belong to one's own group or, on the other hand, is of an unbridgeably higher status which makes him into a qualitative 'other'. Absolute anonymity, however, is an expression of 'unavailability' ('Nichtverfügbarkeit': Gladigow). The groups under discussion, though only moderately anonymous and hence only partially unavailable for communication, yet require the additional appeal to named, individual gods. We encountered absolute anonymity (and its consequences) in our second and third chapters. The aim of the present discussion was to open our eyes to the logically inconsistent, yet workable and peaceful co-existence of an anonymous total with identifiable individuals who actually form part of the total.

[65] As we discussed in Ch. III p. 272, where I followed B. Gladigow.

APPENDIX TWO

UNITY OR DIVERSITY—ONE GOD OR MANY? A MODERN DEBATE*

Chapter I opened with a sketch of the deep cleft that yawned between the positions of Jean-Pierre Vernant and Walter Burkert. One of the major issues in which their controversy manifested itself concerned the question: is there one Zeus, one Apollo, one Athena or are there many different gods covered by each of these names? In this appendix I propose to discuss the tenets behind this controversy as it took form in a debate between two different protagonists. To my mind no dispute reveals more clearly the core of the aporia. One of the antagonists this time is Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood,[1] who in an earlier publication had averred: "The gods who were worshipped in the different *poleis* were, of course, perceived to be the same gods."[2] The other is John D. Mikalson, who once wrote: "To Athenians Athena Polias, Athena Skiras, and Athena Hygieia were separate, for all purposes independent deities."[3] So far, to the best of my knowledge, the 'debate' has not advanced beyond a scathing critique by the first mentioned author on a few characteristic statements of the second.

In order to contest the perception in modern scholarship, and especially in Mikalson's statement, "that the gods of tragedy are 'artificial' literary creations that had little relationship with the gods worshipped by the Athenian polis,"[4] Sourvinou-Inwood singles out some passages of Mikalson's *Honor thy God: Popular Religion in Greek Tragedy*. Together these passages amount to the thesis that the gods of everyday Greek life were hardly recognizable in the gods of the tragedy and that

---

* This appendix aims to present an exemplary illustration of the dilemma as discussed in Ch. I, section "They may but need not" (pp. 77–84) and should preferably be read in that context.

[1] Sourvinou-Inwood 1997.

[2] See the full quote above Ch. I, n. 145, with my preliminary reaction.

[3] Just so Mikalson 1983, 69 ff., on the epithets of Zeus, to be mentioned shortly.

[4] The idea has been put forward many times. One for many: "we would be well advised to erect a firm partition between stage and temple/chapel" (Pleket 1981, 177).

the main reason for this distinction is that in everyday religion, the Zeus Ktesios in the little shrine of the private house was not Zeus the Thunderer and that "in tragedy this type of gods, Zeus Ktesios, Zeus Herkeios,[5] Demeter, Athena Hygeia, Asklepios," very essential for daily religious life, "were not among the major divine actors." Here, too, one finds the phrase on the differences of the different Athenai, just quoted. Let us briefly review and assess Sourvinou-Inwood's critical responses to these stray notes in Mikalson's book and her objections to its general tenor.[6]

A first, preliminary, counter-argument is that Zeus Herkeios, Zeus Ktesios, and Demeter[7] *do* occur in tragedy. The observation is accurate but misses the point. Certainly these gods do appear in tragedy, as, more often, does (Apollo) Aguieus, but *not* as "major divine actors." On the contrary, whenever these gods occur this is particularly in those contexts in which their natural role as symbols of the actors' places of belonging is required. Their task is to enhance the tragic flavour, for

---

[5] On these and other gods of the house see Parker 2005, 13–20, and above p. 122. On the various Zeuses such as Herkeios and Ktesios in their function of house gods see: H. Sjövall, *Zeus im altgriechischen Hauskult* (Lund 1931). More recently there is the important discussion in Brulé 2005a, who argues *inter alia* (p. 53) that in cases of emigration people used to take along these gods (and Hestia and probably also Apollo Patroios) to their new home. On Zeus Ktesios, who was represented and worshipped in the form of a jar (Athen. 473B–C), but also as a snake, see: D. Jaillard, "Images" des dieux et pratiques rituelles dans les maisons grecques. L'exemple de Zeus Ktésios, *MEFRA* 116 (2004) 871–983; Brulé 2005a, 33–40. M. Strocka, Ein klassischer Hausaltar, *Arch. Anz.* 2006, 1–7, discusses an altar in a private house (late 5th c. BC), dedicated to Aphrodite Ourania and Zeus Herkeios. He compares other known altars, most of them dedicated to Zeus Herkeios and Zeus Ktesios with other gods or goddesses. Most recently there are brief discussions in Faraone 2008, 216 f.; Boedeker 2008, 230–234.

[6] I trust that, for my reaction to her views, I am allowed to adopt her own excuse "for such a strategy which may offend against some (culturally determined) preconceptions about what is perceived as (overt) polemic." Space and time do not allow a discussion of her own interpretations as presented in her paper and especially in her book of 2003, with which I often agree. I also pass over her introductory calls for caution when approaching religion as represented in tragedy: descriptions of ritual may serve the underlying motifs of the tragedy for instance as a reversal of norms. Context must be taken in account. Indeed, these notes should be taken to heart: truisms may be true. On the consequences of context for gods in Euripidean tragedy see: Mastronarde 2002. More interesting is the notion of 'unknowability' which in S.'s view is a central category in Greek religion. I could not agree more. Several chapters of the present book are concerned precisely with that. For the further development of S.'s theoretical considerations I refer to Sourvinou-Inwood 2003, 1–66.

[7] The only instance mentioned here is that a scene in Euripides' *Suppliants* takes place in the forecourt of the sanctuary of Eleusis.

instance in scenes of a figure's departure from, or return to the fatherland[8] or of the imminent fall of a city, as we have seen in the case of (Apollo) Aguieus.[9] If anywhere in tragedy it is here that we have indisputable—and functional—references to everyday life.

Of the three rapid *praeteritiones* that then follow, which like all *praeteritiones* merit particularly careful reading, I single out one, since the other two will be implied in the discussion of the main arguments. "Let us leave aside entirely statements in texts that make clear that each divinity was perceived as one across his or her different cults." The '*ne dicam*' element of the *praeteritio* is particularly regrettable since the most viable strategy to support (though not prove) one's case would exactly consist of citing such statements. Most regrettable, however, because the two instances that S. nonetheless does mention (and which, I guess, may be taken as particularly exemplary), contradict or at least shed doubt on her own thesis.[10] One is Xen. *Symp.* 8.9, where the speaker, who is in doubt concerning the existence of two different Aproditai (but all the same continues distinguishing them on the grounds of their different altars, temples and sacrifices) is no less a person than Socrates. Our discussion of this passage shows that Socrates *did* show concern about the question of unity and *did not* come to a clear decision. The remaining question, however, was and still is: what did the Greek Tom, Dick and Harry think about it?

The other testimony is Xen. *Anab.* 7.8.4–6, which we also encountered earlier, which raises the question of the relationship between Zeus Basileus and Zeus Meilichios. S. comments: "for the point there surely is not that Zeus Meilichios is a separate god, but that one should not neglect any aspect of the god's persona." Surely? Without further (con)textual argument, this is nothing but a modern scholar's guess and a preconceived one at that. A glance into the text, as we saw, suggests that this interpretation is not the one of Xenophon himself. If he had intended to say this, his phrasing was at least inadequate. Incidentally, expressions such as "surely" and "of course," far from being arguments, rather seem to be at odds with the methodology,

---

[8] Pulleyn 1997, 159 f. collects a number of texts in which the hero returning from abroad greets his local gods. He observes that the term often used is προσειπεῖν, and concludes that this is not a case of prayers but of "greetings to long-lost friends."

[9] See especially Chapter I nn. 276 and 281.

[10] Both testimonia have been discussed above p. 71 and p. 63, respectively, where see my interpretations.

recommended by Sourvinou-Inwood herself, "which, as far as possible, prevents our own—culturally determined—assumptions from intruding into, and thus corrupting, the investigation."

Then follow S.'s five major arguments against Mikalson's separative distinctions between gods under one name in view of their various epithets, which is the basis of his differentiation between one (abstract and not realistic) Athena in tragedy and the many different Athenai in daily life.

1) The common iconographical type of each god, as for instance Artemis as a young girl with a bow and arrow, with or without deer, suggests unity in representation, hence unity in the god's imagery. The fact that Zeus Ktesios does not seem to have had a very Zeus-like appearance and Zeus Meilichios as a snake not at all, is not a counter argument. On the contrary, their metamorphoses are a manner to express the otherness of the gods.[11]
2) The core aspect of each divinity includes genealogy. How could a Paean, as inscribed in a sanctuary, refer to Apollo, the son of Leto and Zeus, if each Apollo was perceived as a different divinity?
3) Cult regulations sometimes use the deity's name alone, without epithet, or refer to some deities by name alone and to others by name and epithet. *Piece de resistance* here is *IG* II² 334 with sacrifices at the Lesser Panathenaia for Athena, Athena Hygieia, Athena Polias and Athena Nike, formulations that "make clear that in the assumptions that shaped these choices Athena was one goddess who had different cults as she had different altars."[12]
4) Important cultic elements were shared between different sanctuaries of the same divinity with different epithets. Example: the *Arkteia* for Artemis Brauronia and Artemis Mounichia, and vases of a particular type and shape that are used for several Artemides in Attica.
5) Mythological representations, too, may be shared by temples of gods with different epithets. Example: according to Mikalson's thesis, Athena in the gigantomachy scenes of the Parthenon metopes should represent Athena Polias while Athena in the same mytho-

[11] One recognizes the Vernantian position to which S. duly refers in her n. 16.
[12] One of the prescriptions says that all but one of the cows are to be sacrificed at the great altar of Athena and one at that of Nike.

logical context on the east pediment of the Athena Nike temple should be Athena Nike. Sourvinou-Inwood concludes:

> This extremely implausible scenario, which makes nonsense of the way in which meaning is created out of images, is further invalidated, I suggest, by the fact that, as we have seen, it was possible to refer to dedications to Athena on the Acropolis as just 'Athena' or as 'child of Zeus', or 'daughter of Zeus', which referred to a divine personality—Athena, the goddess Athena in all her facets.

I have chosen to give a rather extensive rendition of these arguments since they lay bare the kernel of the discordance between the two positions. It is impossible to go extensively into all the arguments presented here. Fortunately all of them can be tackled on one and the same common underlying layer of argumentation.

As to the first, let us, just for the sake of argument, accept for a moment the universality of one iconographical scheme for every god[13] with one name and many epithets, including local ones. What then is its relevance for Sourvinou-Inwood's thesis? The same is true of Maria, Our Lady, the Holy Virgin, the Panaghia. She is pictured as a woman, mostly seated, with a baby in her arms—either on her right or left arm (which, incidentally, can make all the difference between various local Holy Virgins).[14] Yet these Holy Virgins worldwide are differentiated as distinct personae by the local believers. Not by the Pope and not by the young priest from Naples (Ch. I p. 66) but by a majority of Juanitas, Marias and Panagiotes. In her case then, despite the very uniform iconography, it is exactly the epithet, the place, or the specialization that turns out to make the differences in identities. So it appears that iconography as an argument for identity is precarious to say the least and lacking probative value to tell the truth.

I here must remind the reader that I am not arguing for whatever kind of continuity between (cults of) ancient Greek gods or heroes and modern Mediterranean saints (even if it is undeniable that many of them, including Holy Virgins,[15] "in form, stature, and figure" are

[13] And just pass over (*praeterire*) the confusing iconographies of Zeus Meilichios and Apollo Aguieus, and the chronological differences between the bearded older Apollo of the archaic period and the younger one of classical times, and also be silent about the black Artemis of Sicily and the black Demeter of Arcadia, for all of whom Sourvinou-Inwood's global interpretation is insufficient.

[14] See above p. 66.

[15] Borgeaud 1996, 169–183.

heavily indebted to many a Mediterranean god(dess).[16] Nor do I wish to smooth over the differences between Christian Saints and pagan deities. What I do wish to argue for is nothing more than the *conceivability* of the idea that one superhuman figure (god, saint, hero) due to her/his local and functional varieties may multiply her/himself into a multitude of figures that are conceived as mutually different persons. This turns out to be a common phenomenon in current living religion.

What is true for universal iconography is equally true for the other universalities listed by Sourvinou-Inwood: genealogy (2),[17] common cultic elements (4), and mythology (5).[18] In principle, all Holy Virgins are mother of Christ (2) and share the mythology of birth, oppression, flight to Egypt, and final grief (5), as it is all pounded home during the Scripture readings at the religious services. They also share the ritual elements of, for instance, the rosary with the concomitant mumbling of Hail Marys (4). During these services of Scripture reading, sermon and hymns and prayer, the Holy Virgin is consistently referred to as Maria or Holy Virgin, not as Maria del Carmin or Maria Addolorata. With which we have reached the question of the name as presented in

---

[16] G. Freyburger & L. Pernot (edd.), *Du héros païen au saint chrétien. Actes du colloque…. Strasbourg 1995* (Paris 1997). G.V. Lalonde, Pagan Cult to Christian Ritual: the Case of Agia Matina Theselou, *GRBS* 45 (2005) 91–125, demonstrates in exemplary fashion the complexity of the issue of continuity-discontinuity on the basis of a case-study. The influence of the Christian 'redefinition' of pagan sanctuaries must have been decisive: L. Foschin, La réutilisation des sanctuaires païens par les chrétiens en Grèce continentale IV^{e}–VI^{e} s., *REG* 113 (2000) 413–434, provides an exhaustive bibliography (413 ff.); cf. J. Hahn, St. Emmel & U. Gotter (edd.), *From Temple to Church. Destruction and Renewal of Local Cultic Topography in Late Antiquity* (Leiden etc. 2008). M. Wallraff, Pantheon und Allerheiligen: Einheit und Vielfalt des Göttlichen in der Spätantike, *JAuC* 47 (2004) 128–143, offers an interesting discussion on this type of continuity in Late Antiquity.

[17] Which, for that matter, is far from being as uniform as S. claims. The Arcadian Demeter, apart from the colour of her skin, is married to Poseidon, not Zeus, and as we have seen this has its consequences for her progeniture.

[18] Which is not homogeneous either. Gods are involved in a multitude of local myths, often radically diverging from—and even contradicting—the Homeric and Hesiodic ones, as no modern textbook of Greek myth fails to notice. See e.g. Buxton 1994. This, then, has immediate consequences for figurative art. A. Snodgrass, *Homer and the Artists, Text and Picture in Early Greek Art* (1998), shows how early Greek artists derived their motifs only rarely from the Homeric poems but far more frequently from their local mythologies. For a revolutionary new vision of geometric pictorial art as a representation of social ritual rather than of mythical narrative see however: S.H. Langdon, *Art and Identity in Dark Age Greece, 1100–700 B.C.E.* (Cambridge – New York 2008).

argument 3 and both anticipated and repeated in the wider context. It is the central argument.

If, during official cultic performances, the Holy Virgin is everywhere addressed with her sole name Maria (or variants such as Holy Mother), this apparently does nothing to affect the locals' conviction that the Maria of this particular church or parish, with her particular surname, is a special local Maria with very special qualities, and as such different from other Marias. The tenets of Sourvinou-Inwood—now in fact exposed as a dogmatic, very modern, academic and rationalistic creed—just collapse when confronted with the incredible, yet undeniable, potentials of living religion. The facts on which her position is based may be true if viewed from one perspective, but do not bear out her conclusions as absolute, monolithical and exclusive laws.[19] It is well possible that the Athenian authorities who commissioned the *lex sacra* using the bare name Athena, while also detailing sacrifices to different Athenai under the names Athena Hygieia, Athena Polias and (Athena) Nike, may have conceived these deities as different aspects of one goddess.[20] But this has no compelling implication for the attitude of the majority of worshippers. That there are some dedications addressed to 'Athena', 'Daughter of Zeus', and others to 'Athena Hygieia',[21] does as little to prove unity as do 'letters to heaven' in one church of a local Maria, some of which are addressed to Our Lady of Carmel, others to Mother Maria, Mother of God, or Holy Virgin. That the local Maria is nevertheless perceived as different from other Marias, including *the* Maria, however much this makes havoc of doctrinaire theology, and hence is incomprehensible and unacceptable to the modern intellectual, is apparently *not an uncommon* phenomenon, as we have amply demonstrated.

So my conclusion—based on the evidence of living religion, not on theoretical premises ('Praxis' versus 'Lehre', in the words of J. Rüpke)—is that "this extremely implausible scenario, which makes nonsense of the way in which meaning is created out of images" for better or for worse appears to prevail worldwide among religious people, including

[19] Cf. Feyerabend 1986, 217: "In einer solchen Welt, die aus relativ selbständigen Teilen besteht, ist die Annahme universellen Gesetze *nicht sachgemäss* und die Forderung nach universellen Normen tyrannisch." See above Ch. II n. 202.

[20] See precisely on the different Athenas: Jost 1992, 30.

[21] The tendency to collectivize the different Athenas under one name is here of course fostered by the fact that they all share one 'sanctuary', as S. herself refers to the Acropolis.

Christian believers who might have been expected to be more curtailed by one central religious authority than were the undogmatic ancient Greeks. And this leaves us with the question of who is the one that applies 'modern constructs' or using "strategies conducive to the creation of meanings which make perfect sense to modern scholars".[22]

As we have seen in Chapter VI, the anthropologist M. Bloch wrote that the study of ritual should avoid two things: 1) jumping from the inside of religious discourse to everyday speech when producing an explanation, and 2) either directly or indirectly using logical forms. Rigorous—and, worse, premature—application of logical reasoning may make the modern observer blind to types of evidence that do not fit our paradigm. Long ago A.D. Nock wrote:[23]

> We must not look for consistency in men's religious actions, any more than in their secular conduct: norms of belief and facts of practice, words and deeds do not fit: nor do men mean all that they say, in reverence or irreverence, least of all men as nimble of wit and tongue as were many of the Greeks. Religion is not all or nothing, certainly not among them.

Does all this mean that after all Mikalson is right with his statement criticized by S. that the gods of tragedy are 'artificial' literary creations that had little relationship with the gods worshipped by the Athenian polis"? No it does not, at least not without some reservation.[24] For

---

[22] Sourvinou-Inwood 1997, 161. Her position under discussion here also runs counter to her own directives in her 'Assumptions and the Creation of Meaning: Reading Sophocles' *Antigone*,' *JHS* 109 (1989) 134–148, espec. 134: "we must reconstruct in detail their (= the Greeks') cultural assumptions, by means of which meaning was created, and try to read through perceptual filters created by those assumptions; otherwise we will inevitably read through our own assumptions by default (…) and they will inevitably produce very different meanings from theirs."

[23] 'Religious Attitudes of the Ancient Greeks', in: Nock 1972 II, 549 f. Cf. also S.R. Barrett, quoted above (Ch.I n. 233). Moreover, not everything that men do, say or write bears meaning. See on 'economy of significance' in ritual J.Z. Smith *l.c.* above Ch. VI n. 148. On (lack of) meaning in visual art: P. Veyne, L'interprétation et l'interprète, *Enquête (anthropologie, histoire, sociologie)* 3 (1996) devoted to "Interpréter, Sur-interpréter", 241–272: The reliefs of the late Roman funerary sarcophages are systematically overinterpreted by those who cannot understand or accept that the decorations do not *necessarily* carry a symbolic meaning. On overinterpretation in literary texts see above Ch. II n. 41 and n. 105 and below p. 534 n. 15. Cf. the salient summary by Isabel in the motto of this book.

[24] Although at this point I do not shrink from expressing my agreement with e.g. S. Scullion, Olympian and Chthonian, *ClAnt* 13 (1994) 75–119, espec. 117 f.: "Endless ramification is a reflex of the προσήκουσα ἀρετή of polytheism (…) The vision of the Greek pantheon offered in Homer, the Hymns, and the handbooks is not privileged and does not set a standard, or more accurately, does so only in literary terms; it

what still stands in Sourvinou-Inwood's demonstration is that *side by side with* the locally and functionally differentiated many Athenai (and Apollones and Artemides) there is always *also* the one and only Athena, as marked by her name, and by a common aggregate of myth and iconography. And who would not agree with the conclusion of Sourvinou-Inwood 2003, 513: "In the eyes of the ancient audience there was permeability between the world of the tragedy and their world"?[25] It should moreover be added that in other works Mikalson does betray a hesitant acknowledgment of the co-existence of the two positions, as e.g. in 1983, 69: "Zeus has numerous different epithets and to greater or lesser degrees each of these epithets indicates a different god with distinct functions and cult centers." The "more or less" reservation may betray a slight touch of embarrassment with the situation.[26] Scholars, on the other hand, who introduce the term "of course" by way of argument block their access to embarrassment or surprise.[27] Of course? Of whose course? Their course, our course? In a scholarly discourse on the essentials of a foreign religion this term, being an undisguised reference to our own paradigm, is better avoided.

---

should not be allowed to distort our perception of the actual world of cult and cultic legend, which, in religious terms, is a larger and a more complex and serious world." Or in the words of Rowe 1976, 47: "The system, or 'symmetry' which the poetic tradition attempted to impose on the Greek gods evidently had little effect on actual religious practice, which seems to continue to celebrate a simple and ever-expanding plurality of divinities."

[25] The question remains, however, in the words of Buxton 1994, 162 f.: "How were such lowest-common-denominator attitudes integrated with those implicit in the artistic-performance contexts? Or *were* they integrated?" And his answer is: "I suggest that we have no idea how, or whether, most people reconciled the perspectives implied by the various ways in which they might confront mythology. (….) They will simply have accepted as normal the fact that different ways of imagining the gods were appropriate to different contexts. To ask which constituted their real belief is to miss the point." Cf. also Mastronarde 2002.

[26] In his conclusion (*ibid.*) "In practical terms, in the fourth century these various Zeuses were treated, particularly in cult, as different, independent deities," the expression "more or less" has disappeared.

[27] This attitude is all the more surprising since at other places or in other works Sourvinou-Inwood has an open eye for the complexity of religious relations. So for instance when she writes (Sourvinou 1978, 101 f.) that religion in the Greek world is "a network of religious systems interacting with each other and with the Panhellenic religious dimension," and even more surprising, *ibid.* "the degree and nature of Panhellenic influence on local religion and cults remains something to be examined rather than assumed"! In this inconsistency we may detect a perfect illustration of what F. Schmidt has coined *'L'impensable polytheisme* (Paris 1988), translated as *The Inconceivable Polytheism: Studies in Religious Historiography* (Chur [etc.] 1987). Cf. also above n. 22.

APPENDIX THREE

DRIVE TOWARDS COHERENCE IN TWO HERODOTUS-STUDIES*

One of the main themes of Chapter II concerned questions of compatibility or incompatibility of Herodotean ideas about supernatural, divine or human causation, which all represent a truth and none of which ousts any other. The present appendix exemplifies some strategies launched in search of a whiff of consistency in a series of relevant Herodotean accounts by discussing two typical recent studies. I have selected them on the ground of the eminent qualities of their authors, their common focus on Solon's instruction of Croesus (nos. **6–9**, see for these texts Ch. II, pp. 182 ff.), the illustrative value of their common approach, and the opportunity they provide to clarify my own position.

In the introductory part of an eminently clear and instructive paper "Herodotus and Solon," H. Shapiro 1996 lists three widely accepted "main points of Solon" in his first speech, as follows:

> First, the god is jealous and likes to trouble man. (….) Second, *because* the gods are so jealous, human happiness is extremely unstable and man's life is full of misfortune. (….) Human happiness is ephemeral *because* the jealous gods make it so. Third, *because* the gods are so troublesome and human happiness is so ephemeral, it is impossible to affirm that a man has been happy until he has ended well (all italics mine).

With a condensed version of these three causally connected statements, the article also ends.[1] We recognize here the procedure that we met in the second chapter in Dodds' (and others') attempts to merge different assertions, arranged in a disconnected parataxis in a text, into an intellectually satisfactory coherent system of interdependence. Launching such a search is the indefeasible right, if not the task, of

---

* This appendix should preferably be read as an elaboration on and sequel to the argument as developed in Ch. II section "Herodotus" (at pp. 179–190).

[1] Similar, albeit more implicit, formulations return elsewhere in the paper, e.g. at 355: "All human endeavors are subject to misfortunes sent by jealous gods" as a summary of 7.49.3. in which the word 'jealous' is Shapiro's own inference, just as in the passage under discussion.

any reader and most of all of the literary critic. Equally unassailable, however, is the proviso never to lose sight of the actual constitution of the text. This now turns out to be more complicated than Shapiro's phrasing suggests.

As noted under no. **7** of my citation list, the statement that "man is a matter of chance" does not (con)textually follow from, **6a** (the envy of the gods), but is an independent new motif added as the conclusion of the long excursus on the length of life and all the opportunities of suffering (πολλὰ δὲ καὶ παθεῖν) it entails. The words of Solon: "Croesus, while I know that the divine is envious and disturbing you interrogate me about human matters," are connected with his ensuing considerations about the length of life by the word γάρ. Albeit syntactically referring back to the total '*protasis*' there are several reasons for assuming that semantically this causal/explicative conjunction links up with the immediately preceding elements, namely the notion ταραχῶδες and the notion of "human matters" rather than to divine enviousness. First of all, the Greek wording itself φθονερόν *τε καὶ* ταραχῶδες does not invite us to take them as a *hendiadys* nor to understand the second predicate as an explicatory specification of the first. Representing the two predicates as two sides of one medal would require a different Greek formulation. The particle group τε καί is very frequent in Herodotus but, unlike single καί, in this combination καί is never used as a so-called καί explicativum (in Powell's terms 'epexegetic'), but always as 'connective' or 'paratactic', i.e. connecting two independent notions of equal standing.[2] This implies that in this passage the divine is characterized as being both envious and disturbing, one *and* the other. This also follows from the different implications of the two notions. Divine envy always and inevitably results in doom, is typically human/anthropomorpic in its motivation and hence predictable, especially as a satisfactory staff to beat a very rich dog. Ταραχῶδες, on the other hand, represents the random, confusing and disruptive, but not rationally reducible side of the supernatural and

[2] Powell 1938, s.v. καί A III, counts 2407 testimonies, of which 2374 in a 'connective' sense (including 1.32.1); 32 cases of parataxis expressing simultaneity, and only one 'epexegetic' (3.73, which, moreover, is spurious). Generally on τε καί: J.D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles* (Oxford 1954²) 511–513. I am indebted to my colleague Peter Stork for a very informative and helpful discussion on this issue. The final exegesis is mine.

is as such used *inter alia* to predicate *tyche* (LSJ).[3] 'Human matters' and their inherent instability are the very themes of the long excursus that immediately follows, with its rather excessively elaborated, hence intentional, emphasis on life's span. The instability of the human condition, a maxim that we have seen blooming in archaic poetry before the notion of divine envy had come into view, concerns both the humble who may rise to prominence and the fall of the prosperous. It is this two-way type of alternation that is explicitly enlarged upon in this long passage and which is referred to as *symphora*. As such it should be subsumed under the caption 'ephemeral chance' or 'arbitrariness of the gods' while both text and context discourage the suggestion of a direct dependence on divine envy.[4] Just as both Tellos and Kleobis and Biton were of moderate status but acquired a great reputation of being "the best of men," hence of being *olbioi*, only definitively established with their death, so reversely a person of high status may come to ruin. Corroboration of the independent 'truth' of the motif of human instability to both sides can be found in the fact that it occurs in eighteen passages of Herodotus according to the calculation of Shapiro herself in her good section on "the mutability of human fortune" (355 ff.),

[3] The notion clearly corresponds with Cyrus' remark **(11)** that "nothing in human life is stable (ἀσφαλέως ἔχον)," whereas the fearful *tisis* (the law which makes the mortals "pay") mentioned just before rather belongs in the compartment of divine envy.

[4] The phrase "Look to the end, to the final outcome. Many humans the god, after first having granted them a glimpse of happiness, has brought to utter ruin," which S. quotes as another reference to divine envy, quite on the contrary refers directly to the long passage on the instability of human life including the notion of *symphora* immediately preceding. This is corroborated by the word "glimpse" (ὑποδέξας). Artabanos (7.46. 4) commenting on the brevity of human happiness and the jealousy of the gods, who begrudge man more than "a taste of happiness of a sweet life (γλυκὺν γεύσας τὸν αἰῶνα)" does combine the two notions, but should not be projected onto other passages. Moreover, his warning in 7.49.3, Μάθε ὅτι αἱ συμφοραὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἄρχουσι καὶ οὐχὶ ὤνθρωποι τῶν συμφορέων, recalling Solon's remark **(7)**, being a proverb (Shapiro 355), again represents an isolated and different idea. (Cf. Hdt. 1.5.4; 3.33: "many bad things are accustomed to happen to men;" 7.190; 7.233.2. and more in Shapiro 356 f., all without any reference to gods jealous or not). Like Solon, Artabanos switches from one isolated truth to another, without thus justifying such a generalizing interpretation as: "all human endeavors are subject to misfortunes sent by jealous gods" (Shapiro 355). Gods, be they 'the gods' or 'some god', may be both kind and cruel, in the words of Parker 1997 (Cf. Eur. *Ph*. 379: "some god has ruined Oedipus' house"—*ibid.* 1199: "some god has saved Thebes"). The fact that in all observations or explanations—also the ones of life's instability—, the emphasis is on the negative side (as we saw already in archaic expressions of arbitrary omnipotence) has no bearing on the envy explanation. Disaster always attracts more attention, especially in tragedy and in the essentially tragic passages under discussion. Good news is no news.

very much including the author's own announcement of his aims with his *Histories* in 1.5.4:

> For the cities that were great in the past, many of them have become small, and the ones that are great in my time, once were small. Since I know that human happiness (…) never remains in the same place I will relate both equally (τὴν ἀνθρωπηίην (…) εὐδαιμονίην οὐδαμᾶ ἐν τὠυτῷ μένουσαν, ἐπιμνήσομαι ἀμφοτέρων ὁμοίως).[5]

If one regards Solon's speech as programmatic due to its prominent location, how much more should one value in equal terms Herodotus' own expressly programmatic proemium. Its message is repeated time and again, perhaps most concisely in Artabanos' truly Solonian words (7.49.3) "Learn that it is the *symphorai* that rule over man, not man over *symphorai*." "Thus, the idea of the mutability of human fortune is prominently presented in Herodotus, in his own voice, at the outset of the Histories": thus, aptly, Shapiro (356). This, to my mind, seriously affects the thesis that human instability is as a rule due to divine envy as she formulates it various times.

Does then contiguity of expressions have no impact at all as a signal that they somehow cohere? It may but need not. One may agree that the third Solonian consideration, 'look to the end', in the present context is a corollary of life's instability (though *not* of the jealousy of the gods). The plausibility of their coherence lies in the fact that both motifs are comparable expressions of *human* experience. Everybody knows that life is instable and that one can never predict the future. Utterances of this type belong in the category of experience, of facts of life (category I of our scheme above p. 187). They are observations, not explanations. As such they need not imply the notion of causation. Jealous gods, on the other hand, belong in another category, that of theology, which seeks insight into *divine* causes of unaccountable events in life (categories II and III). It is our 'drive towards coherence' that entices us to seek logical correlations which the author has chosen not to pronounce upon.

Shapiro restricts her discussion to the three 'views' of Solon, her main interest according to the title being the question whether they

---

[5] See on this: Immerwahr 1966, 153; St. Flory, *The Archaic Smile of Herodotus* (Detroit 1987) 29; D. Lateiner, *The Historical Method of Herodotus* (Toronto 1989) 42. On its mirrorring the words of Solon in the Croesus *logos* see: Pelling 2006, 145 n. 15 with further literature.

represent the view of the author. Although I would dispute both their immediate coherence in the speech and Shapiro's main point that "Solon's three points are presented as a single world view" (355), I gladly endorse her conclusion that the different motifs indeed are part of Herodotus' central world view.[6] As do a majority of specialists who emphasize the programmatic nature of the Solon *logos*.[7]

Albeit not explicitly interconnected by the author, the three Solonian views belong to those themes that, though not easily compatible, yet all belong in a global conception of natural or superhuman intervention in which human guilt in whatever form does not play a role. It is for this reason that I have selected them as illustrations of modern efforts to link them into a coherent unity and of the (textual) resistance such efforts run against. For how much more would this be true in the case of such radically different themes as personal error and hereditary guilt, as voiced by Croesus or Apollo? What about these other touches of wisdom in different contexts? It has become a near axiom that Croesus' responses to Solon's wise instruction including his own later explanations for his downfall symbolize the confrontation between Greek civilized wisdom and moderation versus 'oriental' arrogance and excessiveness,[8] and as such anticipate the antagonism of Xerxes versus the Greeks. In this context one may find the suggestion that Croesus by putting the blame on divine interference has not really understood the words of Solon. But what about Apollo? Should he too

[6] AS against more recent views "that opinions cannot be assumed to be Herodotus' own unless he expresses them in his own persona:" Waters 1985, 104. *Idem* (*ibid.* 99): statements made by Herodotean characters should be seen as "those he thought suitable to the occasion." Cf. also: Lang 1984, 61; Gould 1989, 80. Kurke 1999, 148 with n.152, finds little reason to assume Herodotus' agreement with Solon. Pelling 2006, 143 n. 6, prefers to phrase it as: "Herodotus 'agrees with' Solon's agenda."

[7] Shapiro 1996, nn.1 and 6, gives the doxography. The Solonian arguments return in varying combinations, twice in the same book—in the words of the 'converted' Croesus himself (in both 1.86–91, and 1.207), in those of Amasis—and later in the *Histories* in the admonitions of Artabanos to Xerxes (7.10) and Themistocles (8.10). More important even is that single motifs of the whole gamut abound separately throughout the work.

[8] Asheri 2007, 98. This view has been challenged by A. Duplouy, L'utilisation de la figure de Crésus dans l'idéologie aristocratique athénienne: Solon, Alcméon, Miltiade et le dernier roi de Lydie, *AC* 68 (1999) 1–22. The contrast is not one between Greek civic virtues and oriental despotism, nor is it about a supposed Greek fear of excessive luxury. At stake is only the censuring of the inferences drawn by Croesus resulting in his haughty thoughts.

have listened better to Solon's wisdom-sayings? Or was his wisdom, though in our eyes incompatible with Solon's, yet equally true?

Several of these issues are the concern of the second essay that I will now briefly present: Chr. Pelling, "Educating Croesus: Talking and Learning in Herodotus' Lydian *Logos*" (2006). In this elegant, ingenious and at times brilliant essay the author (henceforth P.) broaches two themes: the elusiveness of wisdom and the distortion of discourse, as illustrated in the passages under discussion here and in the one on Croesus' advice to Cyrus concerning his campaign against the Massagetai (1.207). I will first focus on his treatment of the same introductory passage as the one chosen by Shapiro.

In Solon's instruction of Croesus P. (p. 148) discerns three major themes: 1) Life is mutable, anyone's fortune may change; 2) God is envious of those who come closest to divine prosperity, and turbulent in destroying them; 3) The most prosperous act or think in particular ways and those ways contribute to their destruction.

We notice similarities and differences with the three "points of Solon" mentioned by Shapiro. And here, too, it is necessary to strike a few notes of warning. First, as argued above, it is very doubtful whether "and turbulent in destroying them" may be so self-evidently connected with divine envy as P., like Shapiro, does. Secondly, P.'s third 'position' is not to be found in Solon's words in this passage, as listed under my nos. **6–8**. P. frankly admits this (p. 149 ff.) but tries to save his third position by referring to phrases that precede "backwards a little in the narrative" (1.5.3 and 1.26.3), neither of which sustains his argument.[9] He of course also refers to Herodotus' own statement that immediately follows (no. **9**): "A great righteous indignation (νέμεσις) came from God and struck Croesus, presumably (ὡς εἰκάσαι) because he thought himself the most prosperous of all mortals." Here for the first time the element of personal guilt instead of the mere precarious

[9] They concern Croesus' "unjust deeds" (his aggressive initiatives against the Greeks (1.5.3) and "the grievances Croesus had put forward" (1.26.3) against the Greek cities that he wished to attack. Both actions and reproaches belong to the conventional rhetoric of reproach in mutual Greek hostile contacts as well (K. Yellin, *Exhortation: The Rhetoric of Combat Leadership. Studies in Rhetoric Communication* [Columbia S.C. 2008] Ch. 1), and belong to the conventional 'lies in warfare' (Barnes 1994, 23–29). Croesus may not be the most self-effacing character but in these passages there is not the slightest hint of 'haughty thoughts' typical of oriental despotism. For that matter, P. elsewhere (163) objects to precisely the idea that the audience must have remembered earlier relevant texts, with the argument that: "Such explanations are slippery things; even when all the clues are present, they can be missed."

position of the excessively prosperous person comes to the fore. P. admits (150): "This is not simply the second 'divine envy' thesis, for such envy would most naturally be evoked not by Croesus' perception of his own felicity but by the fact of a felicity so great that it threatened the boundaries of the divine." And so it is. In this first (and last in the present context) personal comment Herodotus contributes an explanation that has not been suggested anywhere in Solon's own words and which should consequently be considered as an additional new suggestion. "Presumably" (ὡς εἰκάσαι) also tells for that. So far there is not one reason for reading this third 'position' ("the most prosperous act or think in particular ways and those ways contribute to their destruction") into the foregoing exposé of the wise Solon.[10]

Last but not least, one may wonder why Solon, if he did have this in mind, left it to the author's voice to make his intentions explicit. Why did the author not allow Solon to say himself what this modern reader would have liked to put into his mouth? P. argues that his ancient audience would have understood why.[11] Solon is talking to a despot, which requires "its own conversational dynamics. No one can talk straight."[12] Here we meet for the first time an appeal to intentional *paralipsis* or 'implicitness' in order to save an interpretation. In Chapter II I have paid attention to this productive, but precarious, hermeneutic strategy. In the present case, however, the question remains if such an excellent author as Herodotus might not have found ways to help the reader with some hint that would not be noticed by king Croesus, who after all is a specialist in misunderstanding messages. This question is all the more pressing since at 1.207, Croesus in an incomparably less comfortable position at a royal court than Solon is in 1.32, introduces a speech to king Cyrus with a dauntless reminder that the king is not divine, followed by one philosophical warning, namely the *kuklos*-idea of the alternation of good fortune and misfortune, which, incidentally, has no understandable link with his ensuing advice. This advice, however, which itself is so inconsistent that generations of scholars including

[10] Nor should one adduce the fact that Solon Fr. 6.3–4W has the same idea: "Oversufficiency generates *hybris*, whenever great prosperity attends those humans whose minds are not wel-ordered," a thought which, as I agree with P., may have been proverbial. Many other genuine authentic Solonian 'positions', as we will see, will emerge later in the Croesus-*logos* by the mouth of other speakers, including Apollo.

[11] In the wake of quite a few earlier readers. See his p. 152 n. 41.

[12] "The perverted *logos* at an autocratic court," is the major theme of P.'s second main subject in this paper: "distortion of discourse" (142).

P. must launch all their ingenuity to retrieve at least some coherent meaning from it,[13] is phrased in an amazingly candid language. Solon might easily have allowed himself a similar touch of frankness in his approach to (oriental) royalty.[14]

Let us stop here for a moment and have a look at one of P.'s remarks that may lead us to the kernel of our disputation. He introduces his "three Solonian positions" with the words: "It is hard to know exactly what Solon is saying here and the account leaves it open which of them will prove the most insightful." The reader might "be aware of a blur of different suggestions that partly, but only partly, overlap." And he quotes Munson 2001, 184: "Solon's words are cryptic and deliver a mixed message." To the 'uneducated' reader the first parts of these complaints of either scholar may come as a surprise since he sees nothing cryptic at all in Solon's words.[15] The Greek sage is giving two crystal clear, distinct options to explain (mis)fortune: envy of the gods and the instability of life with its alternation of luck and misfortune. He is *not* mentioning P.'s third option, but does present his equally

---

[13] One should read P. 167–169 to taste all these admirably ingenious, subtle, sophisticated *and* divergent attempts of readers to save the author (and Croesus) from inconsistency. Following a modern sceptic (Ch. II, n. 102) one would tend to believe "that the critic himself wrote the work under discussion." Indeed: "as is also with metaphors, implicitness may result in polyinterpretability" (Pfeijffer 1999, 25). But it is beyond imagination that the author should have considered all these (modern) conjectures before deciding not to mention any at all. All too often polyinterpretability seems to be the result of the reader's creative involvement rather than that of the author and as such comes close to 'overinterpretation' (on which see fundamentally: 'Interpréter, Sur-interpréter', *Enquête: anthropologie, histoire, sociologie* 3 [1996]; cf. P.J. Rhodes, ΕΠΙΔΑΜΝΟΣ ΕΣΤΙ ΠΟΛΙΣ: On not Overinterpreting Thucydides, *Histos* 2 [1998] 1–10). And cf. Ch. II n. 105. A very precarious variant of this approach, of course, is the one that post-modernism has chosen as its major hermeneutic strategy. Cf. above p. 193 f.

[14] P. himself (p. 162 n.78) in another context resorts to a similar counter-argument: "Had Herodotus wanted to remind us of this (.....) he would have found ways to recall the Gyges episode."

[15] I am not unaware that, regrettably, the English language uses 'to say' in at least two meanings: to 'utter words; speak' (German 'sagen', Dutch 'zeggen') and 'to have the intention to make clear' (German 'meinen', Dutch 'bedoelen'), as in "what are you saying?" or: "what I am saying is…" Incidentally, ancient Greek has no separate verbal expression at all for 'to mean' as conveying the intention of the speaker ("I mean A not B") for which they too—like their very late offspring—use the verb 'to say' λέγειν (cf. modern Greek: θέλω νὰ πῶ). See: I. Sluiter, The Greek Tradition, in: W. van Bekkum, J.E.M. Houben, I. Sluiter, K. Versteegh, *The Emergence of Semantics in Four Linguistic Traditions: Hebrew, Sanskrit, Greek, Arabic* (Amsterdam-Philadelphia 1997), 147–224, espec. 152.

clear conclusion that it is impossible (hence not advisable) to affirm that a man is happy until his life has ended well.

Now then, what is so cryptic about what Solon 'is saying'? The answer must be looked for in the parts that follow these primary concerns. Munson adds that Solon delivers "a mixed message." But exactly what is making the message mixed? What would we have liked to find in the text to 'unmix' them? The answer may be found in P.'s additional words: "the account leaves it open which of them will prove the most insightful." Apparently Herodotus might have prevented all this mixing up *by offering the (modern) reader the possibility of choice*. The problem, however, is that the various options are delivered paratactically one after the other, without a trace of the author's preference or as much as a touchstone of truth to help the reader choose between the contradictory versions. Apparently (some/most) modern readers would have preferred the author strewing around an occasional "or", "in other words," preferably even "or rather." In other words, they would have liked him to show his colors. But that is exactly what the author fails to do, and, to make it worse, we will never get an answer to the question of which of his 'positions' "will prove the most insightful" as P. hopefully suggests. This being so, should not we consider the possibility that this 'question of choice' is not an appropriate question at all? Why shouldn't we read the author's idiosyncratic phrasing as implying that there *is not one* preferable solution and that it is beyond human power to choose between the many divergent insights because all of them are equally true?[16]

Why does Herodotus leave us in the lurch? Not by accident or due to carelessness. Convinced that there must be some order in this "cryptic blur of different suggestions," we have seen two modern readers setting out on a quest for hermeneutic devices that the author has kept secret but whose detection might help us alleviate the discrepancies. But what about the subsequent interpretations by Croesus and Apollo? Croesus' own consideration that "it was by divine inspiration that Solon had said that no living man was blest" (ὡς σὺν θεῷ εἰρημένον τὸ μηδὲνα εἶναι τῶν ζώντων ὄλβιον), is a brief but not incorrect summary of Solon's

[16] Recently I found with delight that Sewell-Rutter 2007, Ch. 1, lists four interacting forces in the Croesus *logos*: the retributive principle, fate, the sins of the fathers, and the uncertainty and mutability of human life, adding that *none of these causal determinants prevails in fact over the other*; each one of them tends to become prominent at particular moments of the story.

words. So is his subsequent summary that this warning had come true in his own life but that Solon's words pertained to all humanity most of all to the ones who deemed themselves *olbioi*. *And* so are, in reaction, the reflections of king Cyrus **(11)**.

Consequently, P.'s (159) appraisal of Croesus' attitude is rather mild. Though sometimes not *quite* understanding Solon's words, Croesus comes close enough to be pictured as "groping slowly towards wisdom," while his trainee Cyrus, who does understand a thing or two, is "a rapid learner." There is no real problem here since both terminologically and conceptually we are still in a fully Solonian sphere. There is no real problem either with Croesus' own divergent explanations **(12–15**, especially the most precarious one, **13)** since they are invalidated by no less an authority than Apollo. The god's own words on the other hand must be highly problematic to readers who are on the lookout for coherence. In what way do Apollo's clarifications relate to the wisdom of Solon? Well, in no way at all. Admirably, P. lists nine (9) conceivable answers the oracle might have given and which would not have offended the audience's expectations. But the answers the oracle does give are of a radically different nature and do not match Solon's suggestions at all. Indeed: "What Apollo does say will come as, at least partly, a surprise" (P. 162).[17]

How to cope with the stark inconsistencies between the Solonian and the Apollonian options? The best I can do is to quote P. himself in a passage (p. 163) in which he fully and without reticence acknowledges the fundamental and unbridgeable gap between the Solonian and the Apollonian explanations:

> The human audience, like human observers at the time, can only see so much (viz. the Solonian explanations); there may be a broader scheme as well, transcending several generations in a way that is visible only to the gods and then later, retrospectively, to the historian. But we should also be clear that even those first ideas were not useless. Even if they proved not to be decisive here, it does not mean that they have no purchase at all on events. This is not a question of the text undermining itself, for Herodotus does not operate with a system where one causal explanation excludes another; any or all of the strands may be relevant later.

[17] I refer to E. Barker, Paging the Oracle: Interpretation, Identity and Performance in Herodotus' *History, G&R* 53 (2006) 1–26, for an interesting analysis of what the polysemic answer of the oracle may have taught the 'independent Greek readers'.

I could not agree more.[18] The conclusion is not only elegant, it is inescapable. The views of the Greek sage and the Greek god, though both true, are incompatible and cannot be reconciled. Had our two readers (both exponents of the mainstream in modern literary criticism) considered the option of a coexistence of several *independent* causal explanations in the case of the Solonian positions, where the idea of 'reconciliation' was perhaps more tempting but unnecessary and, as I hope to have shown, unproductive, it would have spared us the present long excursus. In any case, our exercise has not been in vain if it has served to expose *ad oculos* how compulsively a major trend in current literary criticism tends to impose our drive for unity on an ancient text, without even considering the possibility that this might involve an infringement on the author's way of viewing the inscrutability and unaccountability of life's vicissitudes. As Richard Gordon says in a different context: "Insensibly, and doubtless for the best motives, we palm our classifications off on the ancient world."[19]

[18] Except for the final clause: it is not necessary to expect any enlightenment in a later section of the book or in the expectations of the audience that may lead to a choice. The issue at stake may just be one of those where the author wishes to hint that there *is not* one preferable solution. In the words of Harrison 1997, 109: "Such contradictions are ultimately irreducible."

[19] Gordon 1979, 7. In again a different context see: Salins 1995, a study that aims at demonstrating "how in speaking of 'native' others, one could deprive them of their own voices; how giving them our 'practical rationality' left them with a pidgin anthropology; how spinning their history out of our morality ends up doing no one a favor" (p. ix). Cf. Ch.W. Nuckolls, The Anthropology of Explanation, *Anthropological Quarterly* 66 (1993) 1–21, on the fact that "when we encounter 'inconsistent' explanations in different cultures—explanations which, to us, just don't make sense—we experience dissonance." He argues that in Western cultures the value of consistency in the domain of formal explanation is high, but that in other cultures different domains, and different problems, have been endowed with importance. I.C. Jarvie, *Rationality and Relativism: In Search of a Philosophy and History of Anthropology* (London 1984) 15, in a burning attack on modern anthropological attempts to create a coherence in the cultures of 'their tribes' continues: "But this is not even the stage current literary criticism seems to have acquired. If the modern interpreter finally finds a way to making sense of his text he means 'our sense'!" I have appealed to similar pleas for 'cultural relativism' in different disciplines throughout this book and especially in the second chapter. Cf. for instance Ch. II n. 150.

APPENDIX FOUR

DID THE GREEKS BELIEVE IN THEIR GODS?

In Capter VI I ventured the question:

> Did (the) Syracusans *believe* in the divinity of their rulers? Did (the) Athenians in *their* 'theopoetics,' such as most exemplarily those concerning Demetrios? And what about other Greek cities? And what about Menekrates' deification?

This question brings us dangerously close to a vexing and in my view sorely misguided recent campaign against the legitimacy of using the terms 'belief/believe' in the study of Greek religion. I preferred to reserve a discussion of this phenomenon for the present Appendix.

According to its champions our modern notion 'belief' did not and could not 'exist' in Greek (or any other traditional non-Christian) religion. Curiously enough, this modish tenet—"something of an orthodoxy in the treatment of Greek religion"[1]—does not seem to owe its direct inspiration to earlier studies in the fields of religious studies and anthropology, where a similar discussion developed in the sixties and seventies of the last century. Among the protagonists Needham is the only regular guest in current studies in Greek 'belief'.[2] His two main arguments, to which we will return later, are, first, that the term is intrinsically Western and Christian and cannot be translated into the languages of a majority of other cultures, and, second, that the wide range of definitions and lack of a consistent meaning in Western thought makes the term useless for analysis. Others joined his scepticism, as W.C. Smith had already done some years before in his influential book of 1977.[3] In the fields of anthropology and theology, however,

---

[1] Harrison 2000, 18.

[2] Needham 1972, 14–39; 64–135. Giordano-Zecharya 2005, refers also to J. Pouillon, Remarques sur le verbe 'croire', in: M. Izard & P. Smith (edd.), *La fonction symbolique* (Paris 1979) 43–51.

[3] W.C. Smith, *Belief and History* (Charlottesville VA 1977). Other pioneers include: R. Bellah, *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World* (New York 1970); G. Luckman, Belief, Unbelief, and Religion, in: R. Caporale & A. Grumelli (edd.), *The Culture of Unbelief: Studies and Proceedings from the First International Symposium on Belief Held at Rome 1969* (Berkeley etc. 1971) 21–37; D.Z. Phillips,

these ideas were right from the beginning countered by contemporaneous protagonists.[4] For a fundamental attack on "the call to move beyond 'belief'" I may refer to Wiebe 1979, who forcefully argued that the study of religion(s) "is impossible without use of the concept (category) of belief." Wiebe's criticism is conclusive, particularly in his rebuttal of the argument that, since *originally* (i.e. in a Medieval Christian context) the verb 'believe' meant 'having faith' or 'pledging allegiance' and not 'holding an opinion', in consequence our modern equation of 'believing' with 'opining' should be illegitimate.[5]

Basically, we are confronted here with a clash between cognitive and non-cognitive concepts of religion. And to date it seems that the former have prevailed: the notions belief/believe are thriving in current cognitive study of religion.[6] Or in the words of Wiebe p. 244: "The conclusion seems inescapable; to talk of religion is to talk of, besides commitments, ideas, interpretations and doctrines."

In the domain of Greek religion the 'new creed'[7] of the 'non-believers' rather owes its inspiration to, and indeed has emerged as part and parcel with that other modish ideology, "the new orthodoxy of the

---

Religion without Explanation (Oxford 1976). For the preponderance of action (ritual) over belief (cognition) in anthropological study of religion see: J. Skorupski, *Symbol and Theory* (Cambridge 1976) 46 ff.

[4] To mention just a few: J. Hick, *Faith and Knowledge* (Ithaca NY 1966) 4: "Faith as trust (*fiducia*) presupposes faith (*fides*) as cognition of the object of trust;" A.B. Gibson, *Theism and Empiricism* (London 1970) 12: "Religion has an intellectual as well as a moral component. It is not a way of life imposed upon a state of affairs; it is a way of life with a conviction about a state of affairs built into it;" T. McPherson, *Philosophy and Religious Belief* (London 1974) 121: "To describe a belief as a commitment or an affirmation of trust, or something of the sort, does not in itself preclude the raising of questions about the grounds of that belief."

[5] Despite the rejoinder by W.C. Smith, Belief: A Reply to a Response, *Numen* 27 (1980) 247–255, who in his *The Meaning and End of Religion* (1962), had already argued against the use of the term 'religion' as well, *inter alia* with the very same etymological argument that the word religion goes back to (Latin) *religio* in Roman times (!). For a more general discussion see: D. Wiebe, *The Irony of Theology and the Nature of Religious Thought* (Montreal-Kingston 1991). Cf. also M. Southwold, Religious Belief, *Man* 14 (1979) 628–644, in his altercation with Leach's very idiosyncratic reductionist views on religious belief. For a recent dispute between King 2003, who defends the use of the term 'belief', and the reaction by Giordano-Zecharya 2005, see below.

[6] J. Andresen (ed.), *Religion in Mind: Cognitive Perspectives on Religious Belief, Ritual, and Experience* (Cambridge 2001); J. Sørensen, Religion in Mind: A Review Article of the Cognitive Science of Religion, *Numen* 52 (2005) 465–494, espec. 470–475.

[7] I am borrowing here an expression from the title of Yunis 1988, which I mention here for its free use of the term 'belief' throughout the book, however without venturing into the discussion about its legitimacy.

foreignness of Greek society,"[8] that we have already encountered in the 'desperately alien' school earlier in the present book. For reasons of space and convenience I will restrict my own discussion to the ancient Greek context of the issue of 'belief/believe'.

Let us take our departure from an oft quoted candid passage by one of the earliest and most ardent devotees of the new creed, Simon Price 1984a, 10 f.:

> Indeed the centrality of 'religious belief' in our culture has sometimes led to the feeling that belief is a distinct and natural capacity which is shared by all human beings. This, of course, is nonsense. 'Belief' as a religious term is profoundly Christian in its implications; it was forged out of the experience which the Apostles and Saint Paul had of the Risen Lord. The emphasis which 'belief' gives to spiritual commitment has no necessary place in the analysis of other cultures. That is, the question about the 'real beliefs' of the Greeks is again implicitly Christianizing.

It is also in the works of this author that the two basic tenets which, in the domain of classical studies, have paved the way toward this strange idea, become apparent. One is that Greek religion was ritualistic to such a degree that in fact ritual *was* the essence of their religion, while 'belief' (leave alone 'faith') was more or less negligible. The other is the near-paranoid fear of imposing Christianizing assumptions on foreign religions in general and on Greek religion in particular, as we already noticed in the earlier studies of, among others, Needham and Smith, just mentioned. Also in his more recent book on Greek religions Price 1999 never gets tired of drumming into his non-pagan readership the first commandment not to project their Christian ideas upon ancient customs.[9] Here, too, he decides: "Practice, not belief is the key, and to start from questions of faith or personal piety is to impose alien values on ancient Greece."[10]

---

[8] E. Kearns, in her review of Gould's contribution to Easterling-Muir 1985, in: *CR* 36 (1986) 259.

[9] Thus beating it to death as noted by Kearns *o.c.* (preceding note) 258: "By the time we reach p. 36 we have been told three times that the Greeks had no sacred books and twice that they had no church…a repetition with a deadening effect."

[10] Note that this is less absolute a statement than the one quoted above. Yet also here Price tries at all cost to avoid the terms belief/believe, which may even result in two different translations of the charge against Socrates οὓς μὲν ἡ πόλις νομίζει θεοὺς οὐ νομίζων: "Refusing to *recognize* the gods recognized by the state" (p. 85) and "refusing to *acknowledge* the gods that the city acknowledges" (p. 126). Moreover, in other sections of this book Price does not shrink from using 'believe' and 'belief' in the sense used by all those Christianizing scholars that he censures. One instance out

These two tenets were neither new nor totally unfounded or uncalled for. The first thing any beginning student of Greek religion gets drummed into his mind by his professor and his handbooks is that it fundamentally differed from Christianity in quite a number of features. Robert Garland, in the preface to his *Religion and the Greeks* (London 1994) under the title "How Greek Religion Didn't Work", presents a list of eleven well-known 'didnt's,' "a kind of negative catechism" as he calls it, including: the absence of dogma and of anything resembling a church with its hierarchy, as well as lack of a concept of conversion and a set of beliefs to which everyone had to subscribe. Or, in the lapidary formulation by Burkert 1985, 275: "A creed or confession of faith is as foreign to Greeks as the Spanish inquisition." All this may be deemed as long established and generally acknowledged.

As for the ritualistic trend, its roots lie in the late 19th century with W. Robertson Smith, who claimed (1889, 20) that "ritual and social usage were the sum total of ancient religions," a change of focus from myth to ritual which according to Nilsson *GGR* 1955 had attained its completion in the middle of twentieth century.[11] The recent trend that we are discussing conveys the impression that since Nilsson's observation no major changes have occurred.

Likewise, the search for the actual semantics of the verb νομίζειν, the term which in a religious context is generally taken as closest to what we understand by 'believing', long antedates the recent craze of 'non-believers'. Fahr 1969 already gives the history of the debate among earlier philologists. Long before his book appeared, voices could be heard that Greek νομίζω (and ἡγέομαι) did not mean 'to believe' (in gods) but should be interpreted from a ritualist, non-cognitive perspective as 'to worship gods with ritual acts.' The discussion centred on the famous charge against Socrates, where three independent sources, with slight variations, have handed down the formula: οὓς μὲν ἡ πόλις

---

of many is his translation of Pl. *Leg.* 10.885b: "No one who believes that there are gods…."). Cf. Ch. VI n. 49.

[11] "The reversal was complete: instead of myths, rites had come to the fore" ("Der Umschwung war vollendet: statt der Mythen waren die Riten in den Vordergrund getreten"), adding: "Since then there has not been any radical or essential change in method and direction of research." On the 'ritual turn' in the scholarly discussion of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and the ever increasing interest in ritual proper since the 1960s see: J.N. Bremmer, 'Religion', 'Ritual', and the Opposition 'Sacred vs Profane', in: Graf 1998, 9–32, espec. 14–24. On 20th century theories concerning myth *and* ritual: Versnel 1993, 16–89. Cf. Kowalzig 2007, 13–23, for a useful critical discussion of the theories.

νομίζει θεοὺς οὐ νομίζων.[12] It has long been fashionable to dismiss the at first sight obvious interpretation "not believe in (the existence of) the gods." Instead, the expression should be understood as "not honour the gods by worshipping them according to (cultic) tradition." The charge, then, would be "one of nonconformity in religious practice, not of unorthodoxy in religious belief."[13]

Unsurprisingly, those recent scholars who believe that absence of matching terminology necessarily implies the absence of the concomitant concepts perform miracles to substantiate this one-sided restriction of νομίζειν to a non-cognitive meaning. However, without denying that for instance in Herodotus, and generally in texts before the mid 5th c. BC, νομίζειν does prevail in the sense of 'to practice or observe as a custom or institution', a sense that naturally may be implied in the charge against Socrates, E. Derenne already in 1930 had been the first to show that the interpretation 'not believe in the *existence* of the gods (in the way it is traditionally done by the *polis*)' is a correct and sometimes irrefutable one in quite a few, particularly Platonic, passages.[14] Following in his tracks, Fahr 1969 has shown that

---

[12] Favorinus *ap.* Diog. Laert. 2.40; Xen. *Mem.* 1.1.1; Pl. *Apol.* 24c. The authenticity is confirmed by the fact that Favorinus quoted the text from the official acts which were kept in the Metroon in Athens. M. Montuori, *Socrate. Fisiologia di un mito* (Firenze 1974) 362: "la sola testimonianza storica che abbiamo su Socrate." Cf. Brickhouse & Smith 1989, 31 and my discussion in Versnel 1990, 124 f.

[13] I quote the formulation of J. Burnet, *Euthyphro, Apology of Socrates, and Crito* (Oxford 1924, many reprints) *ad loc.*, who made himself the mouthpiece of the then popular view among philologists. K.J. Dover, *Aristophanes' Clouds* (London 1968) seems to take an intermediate position when he understands νομίζειν as "accept (or treat, practise) as normal" and hence translates νομίζειν θεούς as "to accept the gods in the normal way." For further discussion see below.

[14] Derenne 1930, 217–223, whose perfectly convincing argument rests on the following passages among others: Pl. *Apol.* 26C; 27C; 35D; *Leg.* 10, 885BC; Xen. *Mem.* 1.1.5; 1.1.20. In these texts Socrates explicitly defends himself against the idea that he does not believe in the *existence* of gods. Rudhardt 1960, 91 in this connection refers to Lys. 6.19: Andokides, accused of blasphemy, ἐπεδείξατο τοῖς Ἕλλησιν ὅτι θεοὺς οὐ νομίζει as evidenced by the fact that "without any sign of misgiving for his blasphemous actions, but with an air of assurance, (…) he went voyaging on the sea." Even less equivocal is Lys. 6.51, on the mystery gods of Eleusis derided by Andokides:……θεῶν οὓς ἡμεῖς θεοὺς νομίζομεν καὶ θεραπεύοντες καὶ ἁγνεύοντες θύομεν καὶ προσευχόμεθα (……), which Burnet (*o.c.* preceding note) cites as support for his 'ritual' interpretation of νομίζω and in which he explains the latter four words as "explanatory of νομίζομεν", hence as confirmation that νομίζομεν itself must have a similar ritual sense. Quite conversely, I think that the emphatic repetition of the word θεούς—so surprisingly emphatic that Reiske wished to delete it—exactly points to the contrary. The implied meaning is that Andokides and his companions *do not acknowledge* the Eleusinian deities *as gods*—hence scoff at them—while the accus-

in Xenophon and Plato, albeit with different overtones, both meanings can be established but that in Plato the 'cognitive' notion prevailed. After his arguments it can no longer be questioned that the latter part of the fifth century witnessed a gradual shifting from "die Götter nicht nach Brauch ehren" towards "die Existenz der Götter nicht für wirklich halten." The latter sense is explicitly expressed in Aristophanes (especially the *Nubes*) and Euripides and is almost certainly intended in the charge against Socrates (and probably implied in Diopeithes' decree, on which the charge was based).[15] The double meaning of the term is perhaps best rendered by English 'acknowledge.' We will return to this part of the discussion later.

As said above, Price is not alone in his sceptical stance. Numerous authors have expressed similar ideas on the imbalance between ritual and 'belief', though rarely adopting the extreme stringency of Price's earliest statements quoted above. Their utterances are mostly of the nature of occasional comments scattered in works of a wider tenor. Apart from one paper, to be dealt with below, I do not know a monographic publication on the issue. This implies that the following testimonies are random, and, if indeed exemplary, certainly not exhaustive:[16]

> To the ordinary Greek, festive and ceremonial occasions were the primary constituent of religion; theology came a very bad second. (K.J. Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy*, London 1972, 33)
>
> Greek piety, Greek Religion (…) appear to be a matter of rituals, festivals, processions, games, oracles, sacrifices—actions, in sum—and of

---

ers *do* believe these gods to be gods—hence pay cultic respect to them with sacrifice and prayer. So my translation would be: "the gods, whom we believe to be gods (or: acknowledge as gods), and to whom—in reverence and pure condition—we bring sacrifice and prayer."

[15] Fahr 1969, on Euripides (50–70); on νομίζειν *and* (at least equally significant) ἡγεῖσθαι in Aristophanes (71–84) (M. Montuori, Socrate tra Nuvole prime e Nuvole seconde, *AAN* 77 [1966], persuasively stresses the marked resemblance between the Aristophanic parody of 423 BC and the real accusations of 399 BC.); on Xenophon (113–122); on Pl. *Apol.* (131–152). Brickhouse & Smith 1989, 31 give a list of the most decisive arguments. One is that Xenophon *Mem.* 1.1.2–5, too, understood the charges against Socrates to involve atheism. For doubts on the historicity of the Diopeithes decree see: K.J. Dover, The Freedom of the Intellectual in Greek Society, *Talanta* 7 (1976) 24–54.

[16] King 2003, 276 n.4, mentions more relevant testimonies. For critical notes on using the term 'belief' for Roman religion see: C.R. Phillips, The Sociology of Religious Knowledge in the Roman Empire to A.D. 284, *ANRW* 2.16.3, 2677–2773, espec. 2697–2711.

> stories, myths, about concrete instances in the working of the deities, not of abstract dogmas." (M.I. Finley [ed.], *The Legacy of Greece: A New Appraisal*, Oxford 1981, 4)[17]
>
> In the older world of the polis human solidarity (i.e. as embodied in common ritual) was more important than the exaltation of faith. (Burkert 1985, 275)
>
> One thing, though, is pretty clear. Classical Greek religion was at bottom a question of doing not of believing, of behaviour rather than faith. (P. Cartledge in: Easterling & Muir 1985, 98)
>
> The central *Greek* term *theous nomizein* means not 'believe in the gods', but 'acknowledge them', that is pray to them, sacrifice to them, build them temples, make them the object of cult and ritual. (J. Gould in: Easterling & Muir 1985, 7)
>
> It was above all the observance of rituals rather than fidelity to a dogma or belief that ensured the permanence of tradition and communal cohesiveness. (Bruit Zaidman & Schmitt Pantel 1992, 27)
>
> What mattered was the performance of cult acts, not the state of mind of the actor. In as far as individuals were recognized as especially 'religious' it was for what they did, not for what they thought. (R. Osborne in: Alcock & Osborne 1994, 144)
>
> It is only in a religious context where beliefs determine choices, that believing as such becomes a central element in the system. Religious 'experiences', 'feelings' or 'beliefs' must have had quite different significances and resonances in early republican Rome. (M. Beard, J. North & S. Price, *Religions of Rome*, Vol. I *History*, Cambridge 1998, 43).

Such for the greater part more moderate utterances will not raise serious objections.[18] As said before, the fact that ancient religious expression is of a ritualist rather than a confessional proclamatory nature is a truism. However, this truism may evaporate into hot air when the notion of proportionality must give way to suggestions of exclusivism

---

[17] At p.65, however, he reports that "Socrates was accused of a specific form of impiety; namely that he disbelieved in the city's gods" (!). One of the many instances of inconsistency among the new sceptics. Cf. above n. 10 and Ch. VI n. 49.

[18] Certainly not if for instance Bruit-Schmitt (p. 27) after stating, as quoted, that Greek religion is basically ritualistic, continues: "however, this Greek ritualism did not exclude either religious 'thought' or religious 'beliefs'." It should also be noted, as Harrison 2000, 18 f., reminds us and illustrates with quotations, that the authors here cited in their more detailed discussions often present a different and less absolute variant of their generalizing formulations. Yet, also in his view: "there are a number of significant overstatements in this modern creed that need to be challenged." And so he does.

and incompatibility. After Price's rigorous statements quoted above, such ideas are most provocatively represented in recent titles such as: "As Socrates shows, the Athenians did not believe in Gods" or "Quand faire, c'est croire" (When doing/acting is believing).[19]

The first thing that strikes the reader is that with few exceptions these utterances, both the moderate and the extreme ones, usually are devoid of anything resembling evidential substantiation. They are axiomatic assumptions rather than inferences drawn from ancient evidence. This is true for both main tenets that were mentioned above:

1) 'belief' as a religious term is profoundly Christian in its implications and hence should not be applied to the study of Greek religion,
2) a predominantly ritualist attitude on the one hand, and lack of dogma, authoritative sacred books, professional clergy on the other preclude theological reflection and imply absence of the notion belief.

It is exactly these general suppositions that a recent wave of critique sets out to tackle.[20] After having briefly expressed some doubts in Versnel 1993, I will now expound my own considerations as they have developed *inter alia* with the aid of relevant observations by four scholars who have recently commented on the issue: Naerebout, Harrison, Feeney, and King.[21] I will summarize their views, explicitly lauding individual authors only when they advance an argument that does not occur in any of the others or offer a particularly apposite wording.

---

[19] M. Giordano-Zecharya, As Socrates shows, the Athenians did not believe in Gods, *Numen* 52 (2005) 325–355; J. Scheid, *Quand faire, c'est croire: les rites sacrificielles des Romains* (Paris 2006) and cf. M. Linder & J. Scheid, Quand croire c'est faire. Le problème de la croyance dans la Rome ancienne, *Archive de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 81 (1993) 47–62.

[20] Since without exception the critical comments, like their sceptical targets, occur as more or less independent fragments in works on more general topics, I do not claim to have seen all.

[21] Versnel 1993, 124–131; Naerebout 1997, 331 f.; Feeney 1998, 12–21; Harrison 2000, 18–23; King 2003, 275–312. Feeney and King focus their attention on Roman religion and share a plea for a context-specific approach, acknowledging a variety of 'beliefs', the first with respect to various departments of life, literature and culture, the second on various sections of religion. Their common thesis is that different modes of belief are mobile, competitive but not mutually exclusive, and potentially marked by different discourses. In Feeney's words: "The co-existence of the genres of belief does not prove their impotence, but is rather the very condition that makes meaning possible," while King argues for an "essentially polythetic nature of Roman religious organization, in which incompatible beliefs could exist simultaneously in the community without conflict." All this, in short, is what Veyne referred to as "balkanisation of the brain" (see for this and related terminology above Ch. I n. 226) and what, in different terms, I have tried to elucidate throughout the present book.

Starting with the general arguments of the sceptics, King 2003, 277 remarks that Needham's two main arguments as cited above contradict each other. If belief is specifically Western or Christian it must have a specific meaning or an identifiable range of meanings. But if a word has no specific definition (as Needham claims for 'belief') how could one know whether or not it could be rendered into e.g. the Nuer language (as Needham also claims)? King certainly has a point here,[22] but the kernel of the problem emerges when most sceptics do claim to know the precise meaning of belief/believe, namely by identifying it with—and restricting it to—its uses in Christian theological discourse in its overtly confessional, dogmatic and historically fixed sense. It is here that things tend to go off the rails. For why must 'I believe in God' inevitably imply an extended set of doctrinaire connotations, whereas "I do *not* believe in God" in everyday vernacular just means "I do not believe in the existence of (a) god?"

Rather we should attack the whole problem in more generic terms. The most general and comprehensive meaning of 'to believe', to be found in modern dictionaries (often as the first item and quickly gaining field in our rapidly secularizing times) is: "to hold a thing for true without being able to prove it."[23] This is the course of action chosen by King 2003, 278, who proposes the following definition: "Belief is a conviction that an individual (or group of individuals) hold independently of the need for empirical support." And he adds:

> Far from being 'implicitly Christianizing' belief is not even intrinsically connected with religion or religious concepts (.....) The central element is not the conscious assertion of belief, but rather the existence of a conviction in the absence of a need for verification.[24]

---

[22] Giordano-Zecharya 2005, 344 n. 54, reproaches him with simplifying the complexity of Needham's arguments, and also that he "appears to miss the issue of the semantic status of belief as I have outlined it." As to the latter (on which see below pp. 548–554) it would be more to the point to say that King and Giordano-Zecharya (whose arguments King could not know at the moment of writing) appear to differ in their approach to and assessment of the notion 'belief'.

[23] I realize that in this respect there is a disparity between 'believe' and 'belief', the noun being more commonly associated with Christian notions. However, all 'sceptics,' even when they start by focussing on the noun, continue freely projecting their critique onto the modern use of the verb 'believe' (as Giordano-Zecharya 2005, 330, n. 18 explicitly does, and cf. the titles cited above n. 3), whereas the lexicographic discussion is entirely focussed on *the verb* νομίζειν.

[24] I add here a more extended definition by the literary critic Kirwan 1990, 144, whose implications seem to be particularly relevant to our present discussion: "We can define 'belief' as the acceptance of the existence of a certain state-of-affairs, the

And so it is. The argument of Smith *o.c.* (above nn. 3 and 5) and others that 'believing' *originally* meant 'having faith' or even 'to pledge allegiance to' (and that our word 'belief' still betrays traces of those connotations) is *in this respect* irrelevant. If one still fears a jamming of interfering connotations one can use 'to acknowledge (as true)' but it denotes exactly the same. Scholarly discourse is always etic and should therefore be conducted in etic terms. This means that the person who engages in this type of research must clarify that (s)he will use the term 'believe' in its broad 'low intensity' meaning and not in its Christian 'high intensity' application with all its well-known implications.[25]

This would be also my response to the recent argument—very much in line of Needham's work—of Giordano-Zecharya (henceforth Giordano) 2005, 343–347, who censures King for defining 'believe' as just quoted, as well as others who keep using the word 'believe' in descriptions of non-Christian religions in the sense of "holding as true," since this, too, she argues, runs the risk of confusing Christian and non-Christian contexts. Why, she concludes, run the risk of wrapping our understanding, when other terms such as *conviction, opinion* or *understanding* are available? Giordano's verdict is grounded in her own specified definitions regarding the 'semantic field' of 'to believe', and in particular on the inferences she draws from their supposed interrelations:

a) Asserting the truth or the existence of something or somebody (in its use of "to believe that", "to believe something").
b) Holding as a subjective opinion, to suppose, again in the verbal construction "to believe that".
c) Having confidence in, trusting, in the expression "to believe in" and "to believe somebody".

She thinks that

> in non-religious settings, the context selects one of these settings: in religious settings such a selection is no longer possible. In the expression

---

putting of one's trust in the truth of a statement, or the efficacy of a principle. But belief may be more or less explicit, and our use of the word 'believe' extends from the description of knowledge, direct acquaintance with a state-of-affairs, to opinion, or belief based on grounds short of proof, that is provisional conviction."

[25] I take the terminology from J. Van Baal, Offering, Sacrifice and Gift, *Numen* 23 (1976) 161–178, espec. 169–173, who makes a distinction between these two kinds of sacrifices.

> "to believe in god" unlike in the expression "to believe in a friend," the selection is not only sense c) (having trust in God), but also sense a) (asserting the existence of God).

And she deems it specific for Christian and generally modern use of the word that in fact it subsumes three senses, *inextricably* (my italics).

It seemed necessary to me to insert a rather extensive discussion of her views (both here, on the meaning of belief/believe, and below, on the meaning of νομίζειν), because her assertions in exemplary fashion reveal the pitfalls hidden in the whole issue. The definitions and implications just quoted evoke *inter alia* the following considerations:

1) How do we draw the line between 'religious' and 'non-religious' uses of the word 'believe'? Is that between 'God' and 'friend', or also between God and god(s)? Should not first the term 'religious' in the phrase 'religious setting' be defined? Should we call a setting 'religious' when *any* notion *god*, or solely when *the* notion *God* with its inherent associations is involved? Is perhaps the criterion 'religious' not primarily determined by the setting of the issue under discussion but rather by the mental baggage of the reseacher? Which brings us to a further observation:
2) I would call into question the general validity of the qualification 'inextricably' for the concatenation of two or three senses of 'belief' in a so-called 'religious' setting. And this not only when god(s), but even when God is the object of the verb 'believe'. If ever sense a) and c) are *inextricably* interwoven this will be only in the mind of those language users that consciously or unconsciously experience sense c) as an *inevitable and inextricable* connotation of the expression 'believe in God'. However, in the current intellectual debate on the 'existence' of God, one may notice even faithful Christians participating without implicating traditional Christian qualities of God. Accepting the conditions for partaking in such a debate and its discourse they have to change their confession from "I believe in God" (senses a+c) into "I believe in a god" or rather "I believe in the existence of a god" (sense a). By intentionally and explicitly selecting sense a and (momentarily) disregarding sense c, they even seem to have access to two gods, the one of Sunday, written with a capital and provided with all the qualities, attributions and paraphernalia as conferred by Holy Scriptures, church and tradition; the other, 'ein Gott ohne Eigenschaften' whose main *raison*

d'être is to function as a kind of Xenophanean creative intellect and as such being held responsible for the Big Bang. If all this is conspicuously possible in the case of faithful Christians and their God, how much more self-evident is then the choice of sense a) (without any further connotations) in the case of non-Christians discussing Greek gods? For them the phrase "the Greeks believed in gods" falls into the same category as "(the/some) Greeks believed in phantoms, monsters, miracles and afterlife," which implies the selection of sense a: 'asserting the existence of'. And, in the words of King, there is nothing intrinsically religious in that. A general denial of the mental *aptitude* to such selective agility is in our present intellectual climate nothing more than a (Christian) *parti pris* grounded in long superseded preconceptions. There is, however, another, even more relevant, third consideration:

3) The language user (Christian or not) is not even dependent on an explicit and conscious decision to avoid inextricable concatenations of a and c. It is the mere context in which the notion 'god' is brought up that *automatically* evokes in the mind of speaker or listener the appropriate type of 'belief': a) *or* c) *or* both. For "it is the context which makes it possible for the language user to filter out from the various possible meanings of polyvalent words or expressions all except the 'desired' ones."[26]

If Greeks can unreflectedly switch from one common Greek Zeus to a very particular and different local one; if Xenophanes in an ongoing text can shift from One God to many gods—and back—; if in a coherent piece of literature a god is omnipotent at one moment but at the next can*not* do anything he wants—and all this depending on context and discourse as we have seen in the present book—then it bears witness to an objectionable ethnocentric bias if *we* clear ourselves of similar frailties/qualities of the mind, capacities which, moreover, are widely acknowledged and researched in various scholarly disciplines that we have adduced in the present book. Altogether we must conclude that the hard and fast definitory rules as devised by Giordano simply do not work in the practice of the language user the way she wants them to. The title of her paper remains challenging but is so far

[26] As I wrote in Versnel 1990, 17, to which I refer for an extensive discussion and literature on the fundamental importance of context and related issues.

unproven. Below we will check whether her semantic exercises concerning νομίζειν are more promising.

In fact we have landed here in the same discussion as the one that occasionally erupts on the legitimacy or usefulness of the terms 'religion' (already as early as W.C. Smith 1962, cf. above n. 5) or 'magic' in the study of non-Western cultures. Both stand under suspicion of harbouring a hoard of modern connotations, inspired by Christian tradition. For religion that would be the notion of belief and the idea of a strict separation between the secular and the religious spheres; for magic it would include its inherent negative flavour. This discussion is just as senseless—if alone because it inevitably entails an unviable result—as the one about 'belief/believe' and just as unnecessary. "Magic does not exist, nor does religion. What do exist are our definitions of these concepts," thus the opening sentence of an article on magic with a plea for an etic course of action. For religion there is a recent article in which the author exhibits and convincingly rebuts current theories that propose "to abandon the academic concept of religion and replace it with an emic concept."[27] It is this stance that I adopt in the present discussion: in scholarly discourse we have no other choice than using etic terminology, which of course we must define before launching it.

Returning to the notions belief/believe there are yet a few questions that are in need of further consideration. If it is allowed now to say that (the) Greeks believed in (the existence of) gods, what then about the alleged fundamental differences between Christian and ancient Greek religious 'beliefs'? Are they as stringent and pervasive as the sceptics claim? If, for the sake of argument, we agree for a moment that Christians may be assumed to believe in a particular Christian way, how intensive and inclusive is that belief in the practice of every day, including every Sunday? Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox church services simply live on ritual and this includes the spoken and sung parts as fixed in formulaic prayer and litany. The Protestant service, deemed to be poor in ritual, has been claimed to be in fact a ritual

[27] H.S. Versnel, Some Reflections on the Relationship Magic-Religion, *Numen* 38 (1991) 177–197; A. Lindberg, The Concept of Religion in Current Studies of Scandinavian Pre-Christian Religion, *Temenos* 45 (2009) 86–119. In her abstract she states that according to her opponents "the concept of *religion* obscures the specific character of *religions* of (…) societies of the Pre-Christian Age." The italics are mine and I am not sure whether this obvious token of the unmanageability of a ban on the term 'religion' is intentional. Both papers provide a discussion of earlier literature and I refer to them for further information.

in itself.[28] Is Christian belief, for the most part being inherited and hence no matter of choice, *in daily practice* really more consistently and consciously devotional than other beliefs? Is not more often than not reciting the Apostles' Creed rather an act of ritual than of conscious belief?[29]

Moreover, what is *the* Christian creed? Is it less diverse than non-doctrinaire religions like the ancient Greek one? In theory, as confessed in High Episcopal or Calvinist circles, there is one common central belief in one God, one Mother of God, one Son of God (who may be or not be God himself) and one Holy Spirit. But in our first chapter we met a majority of believers who did not at all comply with this central doctrine and manifested a considerable flexibility concerning the one or different identities of the numerous Mothers (and their Sons). Hence, "the monothetic character of religions like Christianity and Islam will always be greater in theory than in practice" (King 2003, 283).

On the other hand, the fact that Greek religion was basically a matter of ritual action in no way implies the consequence that Greeks did not believe in (the existence) of their gods. This would indeed imply a contradiction: how does one communicate with divine beings through prayer, gift-giving, and attributing them a full scale of anthropomorphic (and allomorphic) features that we have been discussing throughout the present book, *without* believing (that is taking as true) that these beings exist (in whatever sense of the word 'exist')? The prerequisite of all these actions, especially prayer,[30] is the belief that gods have power and are willing to interfere in human life. How would they do that in the perception of the worshippers without existing? Stating that Greek religion is ritualist and at the same time that "the Athenians did not believe in their gods" is either nonsense or a kind of sophistry run wild, which should be banished from scholarly discourse. Side by side with, and indeed quite independent of, their ritual concerns,

---

[28] Thus Naerebout referring to W. Jetter, *Symbol und Ritual. Anthropologische Elemente im Gottesdienst* (Göttingen 1978) 89.

[29] R. Mellor in his review of Price 1984, *AJPh* 107 (1986) 298, rightly reproaches Price with reducing all Christian religiosity to "low church Victorian Protestantism."

[30] Understandably, the existence of prayer is not lacking in any of the defences of 'belief', but I refer to King 281 f. for a particularly compelling argumentation leading to the conclusion: "One must first internalize the belief that a god exists before one can believe that the god has any specific power."

Greeks put their belief in the existence and interventions of (the) gods in the service of their need for 'making sense' of unaccountable (most frequently catastrophic) events, as we have seen in Chapter II. Comparably, central elements of Greek religion, such as divine epiphanies and divination, are not conceivable without the notion of belief in (the existence of) gods.

As for the typical elements of dogma, clergy, confession and conversion, they denote ways in which one type of religion has moulded its identity in our Western-Christian culture. But this does not imply that a religion where these expressions are lacking or less prominent is also devoid of something that in more general terms we also call 'belief'. It is exactly here that the arguments of the new 'sceptics' are infested with *non sequitur*s. In the words of Harrison 2000, 20: "To seek to describe Greek religion by means of a stark opposition of ritual and dogma is little more than to offer a choice of two caricatures."

With all this we are not imposing *our* notions on our Greeks. True enough, the question whether gods exist would puzzle them, since gods' existence was obvious, having come as part and parcel of their social knowledge, hence was no matter of discussion in everyday life. However, as we have seen in Ch. III, traces of a discourse on 'the truth' of the traditional gods emerged early in philosophy. In the 5th century Diagoras gained his epithet *atheos* not only for despising and mocking but also for straightforwardly denying the (existence of) gods. How can one person deny (the existence of) gods unless (all) others do *believe* that they exist? And as soon as two slaves, Nicias and Demosthenes, in Ar. *Equ*. 30–34 have a discussion like the one following, we do have a relevant discourse on the belief in gods, just as there are more isolated reflections of a potentially 'atheist' nature at other places in Aristophanes, in the charge against Socrates, and elsewhere.

> N. It is best for us now to fall (προσπεσεῖν) before the statue of some god.
> D. What statue? Do you really believe in gods? (ἐτεὸν ἡγεῖ γὰρ θεούς;)
> N. Of course I do.
> D. On what evidence? (ποίῳ χρώμενος τεκμηρίῳ;)
> N. Because I am hated by the gods (θεοῖσι ἐχθρός εἰμι). Isn't that logical?

So, in the end the question that prompts itself is: who is the one that is imposing Christian notions on the issue? In the mind of the present writer, albeit of Protestant Christian origin, the expression 'to believe in god(s)' does not compulsively evoke any of the Christian connotations that Price and others associate with it. Resistance to using the word

'belief/believe' can only be a pressing option for those who are still, even if aversely, under the sway of their Christian heritage *and* assume that every other contemporary scholar submits to the same yoke. In other words: the statement that the ('religious') notion of 'belief' is an exclusive privilege of the Christian creed and consequently can only be used with the full array of its Christian connotations is nothing less than an instance of modern Christian bias.[31] In this context Feeney aptly points out the distinction between the 'modern Christianity' that is at home in an age in which unbelief is envisaged as the normal position, and the Christianity of earlier ages in which complete unbelief was scarcely imaginable. It is only this earlier stage of Christianity that might rightfully evoke the dangers listed by the sceptics. For the rest it has become clear by now that "there is common ground between Christianity and Greek paganism at the general level of belief" (King 283).

May we then, reviewing this range of arguments, safely conclude that the question "did the Greeks believe in gods" is intrinsically absurd, but if for the sake of argument taken seriously (and taken in its 'low intensity' sense), should be answered in the positive? Not yet, alas, for as appears from the title of her paper "As Socrates shows, the Athenians did not believe in Gods," *Numen* 52 (2005) 325–355, M. Giordano-Zecharya (henceforth Giordano), has recently argued for exactly the opposite. The paper "reopens the discussion of key terms of the Socratic indictment, such as 'worship' and 'belief', from the point of view of Athenian religiosity," hence focuses on the famous charge against Socrates: ἀδικεῖ Σωκράτης τοὺς θεοὺς οὓς μὲν ἡ πόλις νομίζει οὐ νομίζων. Its focus on the relevant Greek terminology induces me

[31] "To avoid the term 'belief' on the grounds of its association with Christianity is surely to privilege Christianity" writes Harrison 2000, 20, very to the point. I have not seen one review that does not censure Price's obsessive fear for Christianizing projections. N. Robertson in his review of Price 1999 (*Phoenix* 55 [2001) 449) suggests that Price's "interest in comparing Greek religion with Christianity (…) may derive from his teaching at Lady Margaret Hall in Oxford." Albeit calling it "one of the book's strengths" he lists some serious objections to Price's argument. More to the point R. Mellor, *AJPh* 107 (1986) 296 ff. and R.M. Grant, *CPh* 82 (1987) 174–178, in their reviews of Price 1984, quote Price's own allusion to his "growing up in an Anglican cathedral house" and his dedication to the memory of his father, a bishop of the Church of England, as the more direct roots of the author's "peculiar sensitivity to 'Christianizing assumptions' which he seems to find under every bed." Nonetheless (or rather consequently?) they find an astonishing number of inconsistencies in his book, where P. himself falls prey to using Christian notions in his own interpretations of his pagan material.

to devote another brief discussion to her ideas. Giordano translates the famous charge as "Socrates offends the gods that the polis worships by not worshipping them."[32] She lists a considerable number of scholars including Robert Parker ("no argument, however, can remove the charge of atheism from the formal indictment against Socrates") and even Simon Price ("scandalous beliefs concerning the gods") who rather than the notion 'worship' opt for 'believe in' as a translation for νομίζειν in this text. Giordano contests this interpretation, in which she lets herself be guided by two convictions: first, that she can prove that νομίζειν does not mean 'believe (in)' and, second, that therewith she will have proved that "the Greeks did not believe in their gods."[33] The latter idea rests on an error. Even if it could be demonstrated that Greek does not have a word that would match our *term* 'belief/believe', this would never prove that the Greeks might not have a matching *concept*.[34]

For a discussion of her first and main thesis concerning the word νομίζειν I will now briefly summarize Giordano's exposé and add my comments wherever necessary. She first relates the history of the research with its ritual interpretation ("honouring the gods") in the early twentieth century, next, with Derenne 1930, the reversal to the view that Socrates was accused of atheism ("not believing in the gods"), ending with Fahr 1969, who interprets the expression as a charge against the denial of the existence of the gods, but argues that the word is

---

[32] There seems to be quite some confusion here. In her transcription of this text (the Greek texts are, if at all, given in transcription only) Giordano omits *hous* (οὓς)—which is a trifle—, and introduces a new, very idiosyncratic translation—which is no trifle because it is certainly mistaken. Apparently she takes the acc. *theous* as depending on *adikei*. But *adikei* is formulaic in official juridical language as the opening of an indictment in the sense of "*he/she does wrong in the eye of the law*, the particular case being added in participium" (thus: LSJ ἀδικέω Ia, with testimonia including the text under discussion, as e.g. also in Pl. *Apol.* 24c: Σωκράτη φησὶν ἀδικεῖν τούς τε νέους διαφθείροντα). So the only correct interpretation is: "S. does wrong" (= is being accused), whereas *theous* depends on *ou nomizon* and stands in syntactical equivalence with *kainous theous eisegoumenos*.

[33] Throughout her article Giordano uses the term 'Greeks' (like all those whose theories she follows) instead of 'Athenians' in her title. I shall follow her in this.

[34] Cf. King 2003, 277: "Translating concepts is far more complex than equating individual words in a direct word-to-word translation. To show that a word from culture A represents a concept that does not exist in culture B, one would have to show that the concept could not be paraphrased into the language of culture B using concepts that already existed in culture B." He refers to D. Davidson, On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme, in: *Idem, Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford 1984) 183–198.

ambiguous and may shelter both meanings. Like other scholars, but more extensively, she analyses the difference between English 'believe' and Greek νομίζειν, concluding that despite some overlap between the two "the notion to believe in gods" is inapplicable to the Greek verb since the verb refers *always* (my italics) to customary practices and means 'venerating'/'worshipping', particularly in the form of prayer and sacrifice. So far her discussion does not go beyond a *demonstrandum*, since at this point her reference to the thorough investigation by Fahr 1969 fails to mention the ambiguity and shift in the meaning of νομίζειν as discussed by that same author.

Scholars have thought to find expressions of *un*belief in some passages of Aristophanean comedy, which, however, lack the word νομίζειν. Here Giordano argues that expressions such as "Zeus does not exist" (οὐδ' ἔστι Ζεύς, Ar. *Nub.* 367) should not be taken 'ontologically' but 'axiologically', meaning that "Zeus is 'usurped' by another god, hence is 'deauthorized' and lost his position." Even if we would grant her this at this place, this does not justify her translation at *Nub.* 1468 f. of the question of Pheidippides: Ζεὺς γάρ τις ἔστιν; and the answer of Strepsiades: ἔστιν as: "As if Zeus was in power.... Of course he is." Here her wish to explain all these testimonies as tokens of 'deauthorization' (also by interrupting cult and sacrifice as in *Nub.* 423 f.) and not about renouncing the existence of gods, induces a misleading translation, which, moreover, the reader cannot check since the Greek original is not given, not even in transcription.[35]

Concerning the wording of the charge against Socrates Giordano contends that Xenophon conducts his defence of Socrates in line with a ritualistic interpretation of the word νομίζειν. In *Mem.* 1.1.2. and *Apol.* 11 the question is posed on what evidence Meletos grounded his incrimination that Socrates did not νομίζειν the gods of the *polis*. Giordano translates the Greek verb as 'venerate' and 'worship' respectively, on the grounds that in both texts Xenophon tries to refute the charge by referring to Socrates' sacrificial and divinatory activities. As I argued above (n.14) against Burnet, this can never be a conclusive proof that νομίζειν itself monopolized the ritual meaning. Xenophon's

[35] It is highly inconvenient if not detrimental that the author throughout her paper refrains from providing the readers with the Greek texts and thus deprives them of a—not seldom necessary—occasion to check her translations on the spot. On the passage under discussion see: P. Brulé, Contribution des *Nuées* au problème de l'incroyance au V^e^ siècle, in: Brulé 2009, 49–67, espec. 61 f.

argument at least can be—and in my view, is best—understood as: if a person's words regarding things divine may have given cause to misunderstanding, then what he really 'believes' can only be retrieved through his visible or tangible behaviour. If a person prays or brings sacrifices, this proves that he νομίζει θεούς in the sense of believing in the existence of gods. Just as in the third testimony in Xen. *Mem*. 1.3.1, where this substantiation of Socrates' correct religious stance is also sought in his behaviour concerning the Pythia's responses, sacrifices, cult of ancestors etc. This passage itself does not contain the word νομίζειν, but what Giordano does not tell the reader is that the term does occur in the immediately ensuing phrase: "that hence Socrates belongs to those who assume (ὑπολαμβάνουσιν) that not the birds but the gods make these things known. And that was Socrates' belief too (ἐνόμιζεν)." This, of course, does not *directly* refer to belief in the gods, but at least shifts the issue at hand from ritual to (cognitive) conviction. In sum, not one of Xenophon's texts *proves* that "Aristophanes and Xenophon concur in drawing a picture that Socrates was accused of irregularity in worship."

In the ensuing section under the title "Plato's semantic turn," Giordano first avers without discussion that in various places Plato uses τοὺς θεοὺς νομίζειν in the sense of worshipping the gods (in particular *Apol*. 24c). But when Socrates starts defending himself, Plato transforms the expression νομίζειν τοὺς θεούς (according to Giordano: "to worship the gods") into νομίζειν τοὺς θεοὺς εἶναι ("to think that the gods exist"). Herewith νομίζειν has changed its meaning into "thinking that" and "this meaning reverberates throughout the whole Platonic interpretation, as if εἶναι were implied in all the occurrences of νομίζειν τοὺς θεούς." It has escaped the author that this presentation of the facts is inconsistent with her earlier statement that the Greek verb *always* refers to customary practices and means 'venerating'/'worshipping', particularly in the form of prayer and sacrifice, as well as with her assertion of a few lines before concerning the regular occurrence of νομίζειν τοὺς θεούς in the *Apology* in its traditional meaning of "worshipping the gods," and particularly so in the accusation of Meletos.

The latter idea makes the only real difference with the extensive and thorough discussion by Fahr 1969, 131–157, whom she follows in both his survey of the meaning of the various expressions and in his (and others') explanation of this typically Platonic turn. Different from Giordano, however, Fahr concludes that *all* occurrences of

both expressions (νομίζειν with and without εἶναι) in Plato, including the wording of the charge against Socrates itself, should be taken in its cognitive sense of "(not) believing in the existence of the gods." He emphasizes that this interpretation must be consistently maintained even if he finally prefers to translate the verb as "für wirklich halten" ("acknowledge as real"), just as others prefer the expression "to acknowledge", which, I repeat, is nothing else than 'to believe in' in its 'low intensity' sense.

At this point Giordano's arguments have come to an end. Has she proved the thesis so proudly announced in her defiant title? Far from it. I have shown that neither her arguments concerning the modern term/concept 'believe' nor those concerning Greek νομίζειν are decisive, to put it (very) mildly. As to her central issue, the wording of the charge against Socrates, the maximum we may conclude is that it remains open to variant interpretations. Here we can only argue in terms of plausibility. Ironically enough, what Socrates does show is precisely that νομίζειν τοὺς θεοὺς in this context can be used, and in Plato henceforth *is* consistently being used, in the sense of "believe in the existence of gods." All this we have now seen. The real problem, however, lies in what we have *not* seen, namely evidence and arguments beyond the meaning of the verb νομίζειν as put forward by Fahr and both earlier and more recent scholars (but completely ignored by Giordano) for the idea that the Greeks did believe in their gods. In this respect there are three major lapses in her treatment:

1) Questions about the existence of gods did emerge in the later part of the 5th century. Sometimes they took the form of cautious doubt as in the famous phrasing of Protagoras (D.-K. 80 B4): "About the gods I cannot know, neither that they are nor that they are not." Whether this should be understood as a token of an agnostic or of an atheistic stance, options that were already under discussion in antiquity, is immaterial for our discussion here. Sometimes we find expressions of a less equivocal atheistic stance as in the words of a character in Kritias' *Sisyphos* (D.-K. 88 B 25) and as ascribed to Diagoras.
2) The expression θεοὺς ἡγεῖσθαι in the unambiguous sense of "believe in gods" is attested already in the last quarter of the 5th c. BC. We have quoted one clear passage from Ar. *Equ.* 30–34 above and an even more explicit testimony in Aristophanes' *Birds* p. #. Fahr 77–80, mentions Eur. *Hec.* 799–801 (ca. 424 BC, together with Ar. *Equ.* its first attestation); *El.* 583 f., *Bac.* 1325 f.; Pl. *Ap.* 27 d–e,

as testimonies where ἡγεῖσθαι θεούς without any trace of doubt means "to think that gods exist" ("meinen, dass Götter sind") or 'to believe that there are gods' (and see below item 3). Then there are the numerous places with double accusative or acc.cum.inf. in the sense of "think, take it, believe that someone is (a) god." All this shows that the options to believe or not to believe in gods simply were alive at least from 424 BC onwards, and in comedy may well have been a reflexion of contemporaneous theological discussion. The term ἡγεῖσθαι does *not* occur in Giordano's article.

3) One of the most remarkable utterances in the Hymn to Demetrios is: "Now, know that other gods are far away, or have no ears or *don't exist* or do not care about us." We also saw (Ch. VI n. 49) that Pl. *Leg.* 10.885b, has similar expressions concerning people who either do not believe in gods (οὐχ ἡγούμενος θεούς), or do believe that they exist (ὄντας), but are regardless of mankind, while 889c–d mentions thinkers who hold that the world is governed by nature or chance and not by god. And the fourth century witnessed the birth of the very similar ideas of Epicurus on the nature of the gods.

These variant testimonies of critical reflection on both the nature and existence of gods, starting in the fifth and coming to blossom in the fourth centuries, strongly confirm that, with the exception of and as opposed to these agnostic or atheist critics, "the Greeks" did believe in the gods (unless after, say, 424 BC Greeks stopped being Greeks). The total disregard of this evidence in the paper of Giordano is incomprehensible and implies the death-blow to her theory.

Our conclusion, then, must be that while θεοὺς ἡγεῖσθαι is prevalent in the sense of 'believe (in the existence of) gods', θεοὺς νομίζειν, too, is frequently used in the same cognitive meaning.[36] It is only at this point that we now may safely conclude that the question "did the Greeks believe in gods" is intrinsically absurd, but if for the sake of argument taken seriously (and taken in its 'low intensity' sense), should be answered in the positive.

---

[36] Cf. Robert Parker, 'Atheism', in: *OCD*[3]: "The old theory that θεοὺς νομίζειν never means 'to believe in' but always to 'pay cult to' the gods is wrong; but it is true that borderline cases exist." Cf. Belayche 2007, 74 f.: "Le *nomizein tous theous* des Grecs signifiait tout autant une opinion au sujet des dieux—croire dans les dieux—, susceptible de débat intellectuel ou d'introspection inquiète, que le pratique religieuse conforme à la tradition par nature normative—honorer les dieux—."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aalders, G.J.D. The Hellenistic Concept of the Enviousness of Fate, in: M.J. Vermaseren (ed.), *Studies in Hellenistic Religions* (Leiden 1979) 1–8

Abelson, R.P. *et alii* (edd.), *Theories of Cognitive Consistency: A Sourcebook* (Chicago 1968)

Ahn, G. Monotheismus und Polytheismus als religionswissenschaftliche Kategorien?, in: Oeming & Schmid 2003, 1–10

Ahrens, E. *Gnomen in griechischer Dichtung (Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus)* (Diss. Halle-Wittenberg 1937)

Aiken, E.B. & Maclean, J.K.B. (edd.), *Philostratus' Heroikos: Religion and Cultural Identity in the Third Century C.E.* (Atlanta 2004)

Allan, W. Religious Syncretism: The New Gods of Greek Tragedy, *HSCPh* 102 (2004) 113–155

Alvar, J. Matériaux pour l'étude de la formule *sive deus sive dea, Numen* 32 (1985) 237–273

Asheri, D. – Lloyd, A. – Corcella, A. *A Commentary on Herodotus. Books I–IV* (Oxford 2007)

Athanassiadi, P. & Frede, M. (edd.), *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford 1999)

Aubriot-Sévin, D. *Prière et conceptions religieuses en Grèce ancienne jusqu'à la fin du V^e siècle av. J.-C.* (Lyons 1992)

Auffarth, Chr. Der Opferstreik: Ein altorientalisches "Motiv" bei Aristophanes und im homerischen Hymnus, *GB* 20 (1994) 59–86 (= 1994a)

—— *Hera und ihre Stadt Argos. Methodische und historische Untersuchungen zur Polis-Religion im frühen Griechenland* (Habilitationsschrift Tübingen 1994) (= 1994b)

Austin, J.L. A Plea for Excuses, in: C. Lyas (ed.), *Philosophy and Linguistics* (London 1971 [=1956–7]) 79–101

Babut, D. Sur la théologie de Xénophanes, *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger* 164 (1974) 401–440

Bachmann, M. *Göttliche Allmacht und theologische Vorsicht. Zu Rezeption, Funktion und Konnotationen des biblisch-frühchristlichen Gottesepithetons* pantokrator (Stuttgart 2002)

Bakker, E.J. *Poetry in Speech: Orality and Homeric Discourse* (Ithaca – London 1997)

Bakker, E.J. – de Jong, I.J.F. – van Wees, H. *Brill's Companion to Herodotus* (Leiden 2003)

Banfield, E.G. *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (New York – London 1958)

Barnes, J. *The Presocratic Philosophers* I (London etc. 1979 [revised and combined with vol. II in one volume 1982)

Barnes, J.A. *A Pack of Lies: Towards a Sociology of Lying* (Cambridge 1994)

Barré, M.L. *The God-list in the Treaty between Hannibal and Philip V of Macedonia: A Study in Light of the Ancient Near Eastern Treaty Tradition* (Baltimore etc. 1983)

Battut, J.-P. Pantocrator. *"Dieu le Père tout-puissant" dans la théologie prénicéenne* (Paris 2009)

Behr, C.A. *Aelius Aristides and the Sacred Tales* (Amsterdam 1968)

Belayche, N. – Brulé, P. – Freyburger, G. – Lehmann, Y. – Pernot, L. – Prost, F. (edd.), *Nommer les Dieux: Theonymes, épithètes, épiclèses dans l'Antiquité* (Turnhout 2005)

Belayche, N. "Au(x) dieu(x) qui règne(nt) sur…." Basileia divine et fonctionnement du polythéisme dans l'Anatolie Impériale, in: A. Vigourt *et alii* (edd.), *Pouvoir et religion dans le monde romain. En hommage à J.-P. Martin* (Paris 2006) 257–269

—— Deus deum… summorum maximus (Apuleius): Ritual Expressions of Distinction in the Divine World in the Imperial Period, in: Mitchell & Van Nuffelen (2010), 141–166
Benedum, Chr. Asklepios. Der homerische Arzt und der Gott von Epidauros, *RhM* 133 (1990) 210–226
Benjamin, A. (ed.), *Post-Structuralist Classics* (London – New York 1988)
Bergmann, M. Hymnos der Athener auf Demetrios Poliorketes, in: W. Barner (ed.), *Querlektüren. Weltliteratur zwischen den Disziplinen* (Göttingen 1997) 25–47
Bettinetti, S. *La statua di culto nella pratica rituale greca* (Bari 2001)
Bierl, A. Karion, die Karer und der Plutos des Aristophanes als Inszenierung eines anthesterienartigen Ausnahmefestes, in: A. Bierl & P. von Möllendorf (edd.), *Orchestra. Festschrift H. Flashar* (Leipzig 1994) 30–43
Bloch, M. *Ritual, History and Power: Selected Papers in Anthropology* (London 1989)
Blok, J. & Mason, P. (edd.), *Sexual Asymmetry: Studies in Ancient Society* (Amsterdam 1987)
Blum, R. & E. *The Dangerous Hour. The Lore of Crisis and Mystery in Rural Greece* (London 1970)
Bodel, J. & Olyan, S.M. (edd.), *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity* (Oxford 2008)
Boedeker, D. Family Matters: Domestic Religion in Classical Greece, in: Bodel & Olyan 2008, 229–247
Bömer, F. *Die Religion der Sklaven: Untersuchungen über die Religion der Sklaven in Griechenland und Rom*, *Abh.Mainz* I (1957, 1981[2], with P. Herz), II (1960), III (1961), IV (1963)
Borg, B.E. *Der Logos des Mythos. Allegorien und Personifikationen in der frühen griechischen Kunst* (Munich 2002)
Borgeaud, Ph. *Recherches sur le dieu Pan* (Genève 1979)
—— *La mère des dieux: de Cybèle à la Vierge Marie* (Paris 1996)
Bowie, A.M. *Aristophanes: Myth, Ritual and Comedy* (Cambridge 1993)
Bowra, C.M. *Greek Lyric Poetry. From Alcman to Simonides* (Oxford 1961[2])
Brackertz, U. Zum Problem der Schutzgottheiten griechischer Städte (Berlin 1976)
Brelich, A. Der Polytheismus, *Numen* 7 (1960) 123–136
Bremmer, J.N. (ed.), *Interpretations of Greek Mythology* (London-Sydney 1987)
—— *Greek Religion* (Oxford 1994, 1999[2])
—— *Greek Religion and Culture, the Bible, and the Ancient Near East* (Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture 8, Leiden 2008)
Brink, G. van den, *Almighty God. A Study of the Doctrine of Divine Omnipotence* (Kampen 1993)
Broek, R. van den – Baarda, T. – Mansfeld J. (edd.), *Knowledge of God in the Graeco-Roman World* (Leiden 1988)
Bruit Zaidman, L. & Schmitt Pantel, P. *Religion in the Greek City* (Cambridge 1992)
Brulé, P. Le langage des épiclèses dans le polythéisme hellénique (l'exemple de quelques divinités féminines), *Kernos* 11 (1998) 13–34
—— "La cité est la somme des maisons." Un commentaire religieux, in: Dasen & Piérart 2005, 27–53 (= 2005 a).
—— Le polythéisme en transformation: les listes de dieux dans les serments internationaux en Grèce antique, in: Belayche *e.a.* 2005, 143–174 (= 2005 b)
—— (ed.), *La norme en matière religieuse en Grèce ancienne. Actes du XII[e] colloque international du CIERGA (Rennes, septembre 2007)* (Kernos Suppl. 21. Liège 2009)
Burkert, W. *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (Berkeley etc. 1979)
—— Sacrificio-sacrilegio: il "trickster" fondatore, *Studi Storici* 25 (1984) 835–845 (= Grottanelli & Parise 1988, 163–175 = W. Burkert, *Kleine Schriften* I. *Homerica* [ed. Chr. Riedweg, Göttingen 2001] 178–188)

—— *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical* (Oxford 1985)
—— Oriental and Greek Mythology: The Meeting of Parallels, in: Bremmer 1987, 10–40
—— Herodot als Historiker fremder Religionen, in: G. Nenci (ed.), *Hérodote et les peuples non-grecs* (Entretiens Hardt XXXV, 1990) 1–32
—— *The Orientalizing Revolution. Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age* (Cambridge 1992)
—— *Creation of the Sacred: Tracks of Biology in Early Religions* (Cambridge Mass. 1996) (= 1996a)
—— "Mein Gott"? Persönliche Frömmigkeit und unverfügbare Götter, in: Cancik *e.a.* 1996, 3–14 (=1996b)
Burnet, J. *Early Greek Philosophy* (London – Edinburgh 1930[4])
Busine, A. *Paroles d'Apollon. Pratiques et traditions oraculaires dans l'Antiquité tardive (II[e]–VI[e] siècles)* (Leiden 2005)
Buxton, R. *Imaginary Greece. The Contexts of Mythology* (Cambridge 1994)
—— (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion* (Oxford 2000)
Cancik, H. – Lichtenberger, H. – Schäfer, P. (edd.), *Geschichte—Tradition—Reflexion. Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag,* II *Griechische und Römische Religion* (Tübingen 1996)
Carney, E.D. *Women and monarchy in Macedonia* (Norman, [Oklahoma] 2000)
Carney, E. & Ogden, D. (ed.), *Philip II and Alexander the Great: Father and Son, Lives and Afterlives* (Oxford – New York 2010)
Carney, T.F. *Content Analysis: A Technique for Systematic Inference from Communication* (London 1972)
Cartledge, P. *The Greeks: A Portrait of Self and Others* (Oxford 1993)
Cerfaux, L. & Tondriau J. *Le culte des souverains dans la civilisation gréco-romaine* (Paris-Tournai 1957)
Chafe, W. *Discourse, Consciousness, and Time. The Flow and Displacement of Conscious Experience in Speaking and Writing* (Chicago 1994)
Chaniotis, A. *Historie und Historiker in den griechischen Inschriften* (Stuttgart 1988)
—— Illness and Cures in the Greek Propitiatory Inscriptions and Dedications of Lydia and Phrygia, in: Ph.J. van der Eijk, H.F.J. Horstmanshoff & P.H. Schrijvers 1995, 323–344
—— *Die Verträge zwischen kretischen Poleis in der hellenistischen Zeit* (Stuttgart 1996)
—— Theatricality Beyond the Theater. Staging Public Life in the Hellenistic World, in: B. Le Guen (ed.), *De la scène aux gradins* (*Pallas* 47, 1997) 219–259 (= 1997a)
—— Reinheit des Körpers—Reinheit des Sinnes in den griechischen Kultgesetzen, in: J. Assmann & Th. Sundermeier (edd.), *Studien zum Verstehen fremder Religionen* 9: *Schuld, Gewissen und Person* (Gütersloh 1997) 142–179 (= 1997b)
—— The Divinity of Hellenistic Rulers, in: A. Erskine (ed.), *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* (Oxford 2003) 431–445 (= 2003a)
—— Der Kaiserkult im Osten des römischen Reiches im Kontext der zeitgenössischen Ritualpraxis, in: H. Cancik & K. Hitzl (edd.), *Die Praxis der Herrscherverehrung in Rom und seinen Provinzen* (Tübingen 2003) 3–28 (= 2003b)
—— *War in the Hellenistic World. A Social and Cultural History* (Oxford 2005)
—— *Isotheoi Timai*: La divinité mortelle d'Antiochos III à Théos, *Kernos* 20 (2007) 153–171
—— Megatheism: The Search for the Almighty God and the Competition between Cults, in: Mitchell & Van Nuffelen 2010, 112–140
—— The Ithyphallic Hymn for Demetrios Poliorketes and Hellenistic Religious Mentality, in: P.P. Iossif & A.S. Chankowski (edd.), *More than Men, Less than Gods. Proceedings of the International Conference Organized by the Belgian School at Athens* (1–2 November 2007) (Leuven 2011).

Chaniotis, A. & Chiai, G.F. Die Sprache der religiösen Kommunikation im römischen Osten: Konvergenz und Differenzierung, in: J. Rüpke (ed.), *Antike Religionsgeschichte in räumlicher Perspektive* (Tübingen 2007) 117–124
Chantraine, P. Le divin et les dieux chez Homère, in: H.J. Rose *et alii, La notion du divin depuis Homère jusqu'à Platon* (Entretiens Hardt I, 1957) 47–77
Chiasson, Ch.C. The Herodotean Solon, *GRBS* 27 (1986) 249–262
Christian, W. *Person and God in a Spanish Valley* (New York 1972)
Clauss, M. *Kaiser und Gott. Herrscherkult im römischen Reich* (Munich – Leipzig 2001)
Cohen, D. *Law, Sexuality and Society: The Enforcement of Morals in Classical Athens* (Cambridge 1991)
Connor, W.R. Seized by the Nymphs: Nympholepsy and Symbolic Expression in Classical Greece, *ClAnt* 7 (1988) 155–189
Cotter, W. *Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity. A Sourcebook* (London 1999)
Cox Miller, P. *Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton 1994)
Croon, J.H. Heilgötter, *RAC* (1986) 1190–1231
Dasen, V. & Piérart, M. (edd.), Ἰδίᾳ καὶ δημοσίᾳ. *Les cadres "privés" et "publics" de la religion grecque antique* (Kernos Suppl. 15, Liège 2005)
Davies M. Agamemnon's Apology and the Unity of the *Iliad, CQ* 45 (1995) 1–8
Deacy, S. & Villing, A. *Athena in the Classical World* (Leiden etc. 2001)
Decourt, J.-Cl. *Études Épigraphiques 3. Inscriptions de Thessalie* I. *Les cités de la vallée de l'Énipeus* (Paris 1995)
Derenne, E. *Les procès d'impiété intentés aux philosophes à Athènes au V^me^ et au IV^me^ siècles avant J.-C.* (Liège-Paris 1930)
Detienne, M. Du polythéisme en général, *CPh* 81 (1986) 47–55
—— Expérimenter dans le champ des polythéismes, *Kernos* 10 (1997) 57–72
Detienne, M. & Vernant, J.-P. *Les ruses de l'intelligence. La mètis des Grecs* (Paris 1974)
—— *La cuisine du sacrifice en pays grec* (Paris 1979)
Deubner, L. *Attische Feste* (Berlin 1932)
Dewald, C. & Marincola, J. (edd.), *The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus* (Cambridge 2006)
Diels, H. & Kranz, W. *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Berlin 1951[6])
Dietrich, W. & Klopfenstein, M.A. (edd.), *Ein Gott allein? JHWH-Verehrung und biblischer Monotheismus im Kontext der israelitischen und altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte* (Freiburg – Göttingen 1994)
Dillon, M.P.J. The Didactic Nature of the Epidaurian Iamata, *ZPE* 101 (1994) 239–260
Dobrov, G. (ed.), *The city as Comedy: Society and Representation in Athenian Drama* (Chapel Hill 1997)
Dodd, D.B. & Faraone, Chr.A. (edd.), *Initiation in Ancient Greek Rituals and Narratives. New Critical Perspectives* (London – New York 2003)
Dodds, E.R. *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley – Los Angeles 1951)
—— *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (New York 1965)
Dover, K.J. *Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle* (Berkeley – Los Angeles 1974)
Dunbar, N. *Aristophanes. Birds* (Oxford 1995)
Easterling, P.E. & Muir, J.V. (edd.), *Greek Religion and Society* (Cambridge 1985)
Edelstein, E. & L. *Asclepius: A Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies* I–II (Baltimore 1945) (= Edelstein I–II)
Eder, W. (ed.), *Die athenische Demokratie im 4. Jh.: Krise oder Vollendung?* (Stuttgart 1995)
Ehrenberg, V. Athenischer Hymnus auf Demetrios Poliorketes, *Antike* 7 (1931) 279–297

Eich, P. Theismus und Fanatismus. Überlegungen zur Entstehung, Bedeutung und Konfliktträchtigkeit des sogenannten heidnischen Monotheismus im zweiten und dritten Jahrhundert n. Chr., in: P. Barceló (ed.), *Religiöser Fanatismus in der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Stuttgart 2010) 99–118
Eidinow, E. *Oracles, Curses & Risk Among the Ancient Greeks* (Oxford 2007)
Eisenstadt, M. Xenophanes' Proposed Reform of Greek Religion, *Hermes* 102 (1974) 142–150
Ekroth, G. *The Sacrificial Rituals of Greek Hero-cults in the Archaic to the Early Hellenistic Period* (Suppl. *Kernos* 12, Liège 2002)
—— Burnt, Cooked or Raw? Divine and Human Culinary Desires and Greek Animal Sacrifice, in: Stavrianopoulou 2008, 87–111
Else, G.F. God and Gods in Early Greek Thought, *TAPhA* 80 (1949) 24–36
Elsner, J. & Rutherford, I. *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman & Early Christian Antiquity: Seeing the Gods* (Oxford 2005)
Everitt, N. *The Non-existence of God* (London – New York 2004)
Eijk Ph.J. van der – Horstmanshoff, H.F.J. – Schrijvers, P.H. (edd.), *Ancient Medicine in its Socio-cultural Context* I–II (Amsterdam 1994)
Fahr, W. THEOUS NOMIZEIN. *Zum Problem der Anfänge des Atheismus bei den Griechen* (Hildesheim 1969)
Faraone, Chr.A. Household Religion in Ancient Greece, in: Bodel & Olyan 2008, 210–228
Farnell, L.R. *The Cults of the Greek States* I–V (Oxford 1896–1909)
Feeney, D.C. Epilogue. Towards an Account of the Ancient World's Concepts of Fictive Belief, in: Gill & Wiseman 1993, 230–244
—— *Literature and Religion at Rome: Cultures, Contexts, and Beliefs* (Cambridge 1998)
Ferguson, J. *Utopias of the Classical world* (London 1975)
Fernandez, J.W. (ed.), *Beyond Metaphor: The Theory of Tropes in Anthropology* (Stanford 1991)
Festugière, A. *Personal Religion among the Greeks* (Berkeley – Los Angeles 1952)
—— *Études de religion grecque et hellénistique* (Paris 1972)
Feyerabend, P.K. Eingebildete Vernunft: Die Kritik des Xenophanes an den Homerischen Göttern, in: H. Lenk (ed.), *Zur Kritik der wissenschaftlichen Rationalität* (Freiburg – Munich 1986) 205–223
Finkelberg, A. Studies in Xenophanes, *HSCPh* 93 (1990) 103–167
Fornara, Ch. *Herodotus: An Interpretive Essay* (Oxford 1971)
Fowden, G. *The Egyptian Hermes. A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Cambridge 1986)
François, G. *Le polythéisme et l'emploi au singulier des mots ΘΕΟΣ, ΔΑΙΜΩΝ* (Paris 1957)
Fränkel, H. *Wege und Formen frühgriechischen Denkens* (Münich 1955)
—— *Dichtung und Philosophie des frühen Griechentums. Eine Geschichte der griechischen Epik, Lyrik und Prosa bis zum Mitte des fünften Jahrhunderts* (Munich 1962[1] 1976[2]) = *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy* (Translated by M. Hadas & J. Willis, London 1973)
Freudenthal, J. *Über die Theologie des Xenophanes* (Breslau 1886)
Friedl, E. *Vasilika. A Village in Modern Greece* (New York 1962)
Fritz, K. von, *Die griechische Geschichtsschreibung* I (Berlin 1967)
Furley, W.D. *Studies in the Use of Fire in Ancient Greek Religion* (New York 1981)
—— *Andokides and the Herms: A Study of Crisis in Fifth-century Athenian Religion* (BICS Supp. 65, London 1996)
Furley, W.D. & Bremer, J.M. *Greek Hymns. Selected Cult Songs from the Archaic to the Hellenistic Period* I–II (Tübingen 2001)

Fürst, A. Christentum im Trend. Monotheistisch Tendenzen in der späten Antike, *ZAC* 9 (2006) 496–518
Garland, R. *Introducing New Gods: The Politics of Athenian Religion* (London 1992)
Gauger, J.-D. Der Rom-Hymnos der Melinno (*Anth. Lyr.* II² 6, 209 f.) und die Vorstellung von der "Ewigkeit" Roms, *Chiron* 14 (1984) 267–299
Gauthier, Ph. *Les cités grecques et leurs bienfaiteurs (IV^e–I^e siècle avant J.-C.)* (Paris 1985)
Geertz, Cl. Religion as a Cultural System, in: M. Banton (ed.), *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion* (London 1966) 1–46
—— *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York 1973)
—— "From the Native's Point of View": On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding, in: Cl. Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York 1983) 55–70 (Originally in: *Bull. Am. Ac. Arts and Sciences* 28 [1974])
Genière, J. de la (edd.), *Héra: images, espaces, cultes. Actes du Colloque International du Centre de Recherches Archéologiques de l'Université de Lille III et de l'Association P.R.A.C. Lille, 29–30 novembre 1993* (Naples 1997)
Georgoudi, St. Les Douze Dieux des Grecs: variations sur un thème, in: St. Georgoudi & J.-P. Vernant (edd.), *Mythes grecs au figuré* (Paris 1996) 43–80
—— Les Douze Dieux et les autres dans l'espace culturel grec, *Kernos* 11 (1998) 73–83
Georgoudi, St. – Koch Piettre, R. – Schmidt, F. (edd.), *La cuisine et l'autel. Les sacrifices en questions dans les sociétés de la Méditerranée ancienne* (Turnhout 2005)
Gerson, L.P. *God and Greek Philosophy. Studies in the Early History of Natural Theology* (London – New York 1990)
Gill, Chr. & Wiseman, T.P. (edd.), *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World* (Exeter 1993)
Giordano-Zecharya, M. As Socrates shows, the Athenians did not believe in Gods, *Numen* 52 (2005) 325–355
Girone, M. Ἴαματα. *Guarigioni miracolose di Asclepio in testi epigrafici* (Bari 1998)
Gladigow, B. Götternamen und Name Gottes, in: H. von Stietencron (ed.), *Der Name Gottes* (Düsseldorf 1975) 13–32
—— Gottesnamen (Gottesepitheta) I, *RAC* XI (1981) 1202–1237
—— Strukturprobleme polytheistischer Religionen, *Saeculum* 34 (1983) 292–304
—— Die Präsenz der Götter, *Visible Religion* 4/5 (1986/7) 114–133
—— Epiphanie, Statuette, Kultbild, Griechische Gottesvorstellungen im Wechsel von Kontext und Medium, *Visible Religion* 7 (1990) 98–121 (1990a)
—— *CHRESTHAI THEOIS.* Orientierungs- und Loyalitätskonflikte in der griechischen Religion, in: Chr. Elsas & H.G. Kippenberg (edd.), *Loyalitätskonflikte in der Religionsgeschichte* (Königshausen – Neumann 1990) 237–251 (1990b)
—— Struktur der Öffentlichkeit und Bekenntnis in polytheistischen Religionen, in: H.G. Kippenberg & G.G. Stroumsa (edd.), *Secrecy and Concealment: Studies in the History of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions* (Leiden etc. 1995) 17–35
—— Polytheismus und Monotheismus. Zur historischen Dynamik einer europäischen Alternative, in: Krebernik & van Oorschot 2002, 3–20
Goedicke, H. & Roberts J.J.M. (edd.), *Unity and Diversity: Essays in the History, Literature, and Religion of the Ancient Near East* (Baltimore – London 1975)
Goldhill, S. & Osborne, R. (edd.), *Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy* (Cambridge 1999)
Gordon, R.L. The Real and the Imagery: Production and Religion in the Graeco-Roman World, *Art History* 2 (1979) (= Gordon 1996, 5–34)
—— *Myth, Religion and Society. Structuralist Essays by M. Detienne, L. Gernet, J.-P. Vernant and P. Vidal-Naquet* (Cambridge 1981)

—— *Image and Value in the Graeco-Roman World: Studies in Mithraism and Religious Art* (Aldershot 1996)
Gould, J. On Making Sense of Greek religion, in: P. Easterling & J.V. Muir (edd.), *Greek religion and Society* (Cambridge 1985) 1–33
—— *Herodotus* (New York 1989)
—— Herodotus on Religion, in: S. Hornblower (ed.), *Greek Historiography* (Oxford 1994) 91–106
Gradel, I. *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion* (Oxford 2002)
Graf, F. *Nordionische Kulte. Religionsgeschichtliche und epigraphische Untersuchungen zu den Kulten von Chios, Erythrai, Klazomenai und Phokaia* (Rome 1985)
—— Heiligtum und Ritual. Das Beispiel der griechisch-römischen Asklepieia, in: *Le sanctuaire grec* (Entretiens Hardt XXXVII, 1992) 158–203
Grandjean, Y. *Une nouvelle arétalogie d'Isis à Maronée* (Leiden 1975)
Grant, M. *Miracle and Natural Law in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Thought* (Amsterdam 1952)
—— *Gods and the One God* (Philadelphia 1986)
Griffith, M. *Aeschylus. Prometheus Vinctus* (Cambridge 1983)
Griffiths, J. Gwyn. *Apuleius of Madauros. The Isis Book* (Leiden 1975)
Grottanelli C. & Parise F.P. (edd.), *Sacrificio e società nel mondo antico* (Rome-Bari 1988)
Guittard, Ch. Invocation et structure théologique dans la prière à Rome, *REL* 76 (1998) 71–92
Guthrie, W. *A History of Greek Philosophy* I (Cambridge 1962), II (1965), III (1969)
Habicht, Chr. *Gottmenschentum und griechische Städte* (Munich 1956[1]–1970[2])
Haft, A. The Mercurial Significance of Raiding: Baby Hermes and Animal Theft in Contemporary Crete, *Arion* 4 (1996) 27–48
Hägg, R. – Marinatos, N. – Nordquist, G.C. (edd.), *Early Greek Cult Practice. Proceedings of the Fifth International Symposium at the Swedish Institute at Athens 1986* (Stockholm 1988)
Hägg, R. (ed.), *Ancient Greek Cult Practice from the Epigraphical Evidence. Proceedings of the Second International Seminar on Ancient Greek Cult, organized by the Swedish Institute at Athens 1991* (Stockholm 1994)
—— *Ancient Greek Hero Cult. Proceedings of the Fifth International Seminar on Ancient Greek Cult, Göteborg 1955* (Stockholm 1999)
Hammond, N.G.L. Heroic and Divine Honors in Macedonia before the Successors, *AncW* 30 (1999) 103–115
Harrison, Th. Herodotus and the Certainty of Divine Retribution, in: A.B. Lloyd (ed.), *What is a God? Studies in the Nature of Greek Divinity* (London 1997) 101–122
—— *Divinity and History: The Religion of Herodotus* (Oxford 2000)
Hartog, F. *Le miroir d'Hérodote. Essai sur la représentation de l'Autre* (Paris 1980)
Heitsch, E. Xenophanes und die Anfänge des kritischen Denkens, *Abh. Ak. Mainz* (1994) 1–23
Henrichs, A. Despoina Kybele. Ein Beitrag zur religiösen Namenkunde, *HSPh* 80 (1976) 253–286
—— Anonymity and Polarity. Unknown Gods and Nameless Altars at the Areopagus, *ICS* 19 (1994) 27–58
Herzfeld, M. The Etymology of Excuses: Aspects of Rhetorical Performance in Greece, *American Ethnologist* 9 (1982) 644–663
—— *Anthropology Through the Looking-Glass. Critical Ethnography in the Margins of Europe* (Cambridge 1987)
Herzog, R. Die *Wunderheilungen von Epidauros. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Medizin und der Religion*, *Philologus* Suppl. 22.3 (1931)
Himmelmann-Wildschütz, N. ΘΕΟΛΗΠΤΟΣ (Marburg 1957)

Horn, W. *Gebet und Gebetsparodie in den Komödien des Aristophanes* (Nürnberg 1970)
Hornung, E. *Der Eine und die Vielen. Aegyptische Göttervorstellungen* (Darmstadt 1971)
Horstmanshoff, H.F.J. *et alii* (edd.), *Kykeon. Studies in Honour of H.S. Versnel* (Leiden 2002)
Humphreys, S.C. *The Strangeness of Gods. Historical Perspectives on the Interpretation of Athenian Religion* (Oxford 2004)
Immerwahr, H. *Form and Thought in Herodotus* (Cleveland 1966)
Jaeger, W. *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers* (Oxford 1947)
Jaillard, D. *Configurations d'Hermès. Une "théogonie hermaïque"* (Kernos Suppl. 17, Liège 2007)
James, W. *The Principles of Psychology* II (New York 1890)
Jameson, M.H. *Theoxenia*, in: Hägg 1994, 35–57
—— The Spectacular and the Obscure in Athenian Religion, in: Goldhill & Osborne 1999, 321–340
Jameson, M.H. – Jordan, D.R. – Kotansky, R.D. *A* Lex Sacra *from Selinous* (GRB Monographs 11, Durham NC 1993)
Janko, R. *Homer, Hesiod, and the Hymns: Diachronic Development in Epic Diction* (Cambridge 1982)
Johnston, S.I. Myth, Festival, and Poet: The Homeric Hymn to Hermes and its Performative Context, *ClPh* 97 (2002) 109–132.
—— "Initiation" in Myth, "Initiation" in Practice: The Homeric *Hymn to Hermes* and its Performative Context, in: Dodd & Faraone 2003) 155–180 (a "refocused" version of Johnston 2002)
—— (ed.), *Religions of the Ancient Word. A Guide* (Cambridge Mass. – London 2004)
Jolles, A. *Einfache Formen: Legende, Sage, Mythe, Rätsel, Spruch, Kasus, Memorabile, Märchen, Witz* (Halle 1930, Tübingen 1974[5]).
Jordan, D.R. – Montgomery, H. – Thomassen, E. (edd.), *The World of Ancient Magic. Papers from the first international Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens 4–8 May 1997* (Bergen 1999)
Jost, M. *Sanctuaires et cultes d'Arcadie* (Paris 1985)
Kadletz, E. The Sacrifice of Eumaios the Pig Herder, *GRBS* 25 (1984) 99–105
Kahn, L. *Hermès passe ou les ambiguïtés de la communication* (Paris 1978)
Kassel, R. Dialoge mit Statuen, *ZPE* 51 (1983) 1–12
Kate, A.A.S. ten, *Avec dévouement total. La lutte de dieu contre toute puissance: origine et évolution de la toute-puissance* (Diss. Amsterdam 2001)
Kearns, E. Between God and Man: Status and Function of the Heroes and their Sanctuaries in: *Le sanctuaire grec* 1992, 65–107
Kee, H.C. Self-Definition in the Asclepius Cult, in: B.F. Meyer & E.P. Sanders (edd.), *Self-Definition in the Graeco-Roman World*, Vol 3: *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*: (Philadelphia 1982) 118–136
—— *Miracle in the Early Christian World. A Study in Sociohistorical Method* (New Haven-London 1983)
—— *Medicine, Miracle and Magic in New Testament Times* (Cambridge 1986)
Kennedy, J.S. *The New Anthropomorphism* (Cambridge 1992)
Keyssner, K. *Gottesvorstellung und Lebensauffassung im griechischen Hymnus* (Stuttgart 1932)
King, Ch. The Organization of Roman Religious Beliefs, *ClAnt* 22 (2003) 275–312
Kirwan, J. *Literature, Rhetoric, Metaphysics: Literary Theory and Literary Aesthetics* (London – New York 1990)
Kleinknecht, H. *Die Gebetsparodie in der Antike* (Stuttgart – Berlin 1937)
Klöckner, A. *Bilder des Unsichtbaren. Griechische Weihreliefs als Medien religiöser Kommunikation* (forthcoming Leiden 2012[?])

Knibbeler, E.J.B. *Saving the City. Ambiguities in Ancient Greek Crisis Management* (Diss. Leiden 2005)
Kolde, A. *Politique et religion chez Isyllos d'Épidaure* (Basel 2003)
Kowalzig, B. *Singing for the Gods: Performances of Myth and Ritual in Archaic and Classical Greece* (Oxford 2007)
Krause, J. Allote Allos. *Untersuchungen zum Motiv des Schicksalswechsels in der griechischen Dichtung bis Euripides* (Munich 1976)
Krebernik, M. & Oorschot, J. van (edd.), *Polytheismus und Monotheismus in den Religionen des Vorderen Orients* (Münster 2002)
Kuhn, A.B. Ritual Change during the Reign of Demetrius Poliorcetes, in: Stavrianopoulou 2006, 265–281
Kurke, L. *Coins, Bodies, Games, and Gold: The Politics of Meaning in Archaic Greece* (Princeton 1999)
Lanciers, E. Die Opfer im hellenistischen Herrscherkult und ihre Rezeption bei der einheimischen Bevölkerung der hellenistischen Reiche, in: J. Quaegebeur (ed.), *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East* (Leuven 1993) 203–223
Lane Fox, R. *Pagans and Christians* (London and Harmondsworth 1986)
Lang, M.L. *Cure and Cult in Ancient Corinth: A Guide to the Asklepieion* (Princeton 1977)
Lang, M. *Herodotean Narrative and Discourse* (Cambridge Mass. 1984)
Lardinois, A.P.M.H. Modern Paroemiology and the Use of *Gnomai* in Homer's *Iliad, CP* 92 (1997) 213–234
—— Characterization Through Gnomai in Homer's *Iliad, Mnemosyne* 53 (2000) 641–661
—— The Wisdom and Wit of Many: The Orality of Greek Proverbial Expressions, in: J. Watson (ed.), *Epos and Logos: Orality and Literacy in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Leiden 2001) 93–107
Laurens, A.-F. & Lissarrague, F. Entre dieux, *Métis* 5 (1990) 53–73
Lazzarini, M.L. *Le formule delle dediche votive nella Grecia arcaica* (Rome 1976)
Leclant, J. Aegyptiaca et milieux isiaques. Recherches sur la diffusion du matériel et des idées Égyptiennes, *ANRW* II,17,3 (1984) 1692–1709
Lesher, J.H. *Xenophanes of Colophon. Fragments: A Text and Translation with a Commentary* (Toronto-London 1992)
Lewis, J. *Solon the Thinker: Political Thought in Archaic Athens* (London 2006)
Lhôte, E. *Les lamelles oraculaires de Dodone* (Genève 2006)
LiDonnici, L.R. Compositional Background of the Epidaurian Iamata, *AJPh* 113 (1992) 25–41
—— *The Epidaurian Miracle Inscriptions, Text, Translation and Commentary* (Atlanta 1995)
Linders, T. & Nordquist, G. (edd.), *Gifts to the Gods: Proceedings of the Uppsala Symposium 1985* (*Boreas* 15, 1987)
Linforth, I.M. Named and Unnamed Gods in Herodotus, *Univ. of California Publications in Classical Philology* 9 (1928) 201–243
Lloyd, G.E.R. *Polarity and Analogy. Two Types of Argumentation in Early Greek Thought* (Cambridge 1966)
—— *Magic, Reason and Experience: Studies in the Origins and Development of Greek Science* (Cambridge 1979)
—— Science, *Folklore and Ideology: Studies in the Life Sciences in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge 1983)
—— *Demystifying Mentalities* (Cambridge 1990)
Lloyd-Jones, H. *The Justice of Zeus* (Berkeley 1971)
Long, A.A. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge 1999)
Longo, V. *Aretalogie nel mondo greco* I (Genova 1969)

MacMullen, R. *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven – London 1981)
—— *Christianizing the Roman Empire* (New Haven – London 1984)
Mansfeld, J. *Die Vorsokratiker. Griechisch-Deutsch: Auswahl der Fragmente* (Stuttgart 1987)
Marcovich, M. Hermocles' Ithyphallus for Demetrius, in: *idem, Studies in Graeco-Roman Religions and Gnosticism* (Leiden 1988) 8–19
Marg, W. *Herodot. Eine Auswahl aus der neueren Forschung* (Darmstadt 1965)
Markschies, Chr. Heis Theos—Ein Gott? Der Monotheismus und das antike Christentum, in: Krebernik & van Oorschot 2002, 209–234
Mastronarde, D.J. Euripidean Tragedy and Theology, *Seminari Romani di Cultura* 5 (2002) 17–49
Maurach, G. Über den Stand der Forschung zu Solons "Musenelegie," *GGN* 235 (1983) 17–33
Metzger, H. *Recherches sur l'imagerie athénienne* (Paris 1965)
Meyer, M. & Smith, R. *Ancient Christian Magic. Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco 1994)
Mieder, W. & Dundes, A. (edd.), *The Wisdom of Many. Essays on the Proverb* (New York 1981=1994^{2})
Mikalson, J.D. *Athenian Popular Religion* (Chapel Hill – London 1983)
—— Unanswered Prayers in Greek Tragedy, *JHS* 89 (1989) 81–98
—— *Religion in Hellenistic Athens* (Berkeley 1998)
—— *Ancient Greek Religion* (Malden MA 2005)
Mitchell, St. *Anatolia. Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor* I–II (Oxford 1993)
Mitchell, St. & Van Nuffelen, P. (edd.), *One God. Pagan Monotheism in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge 2010)
Morgan, J.R. Make-believe and Make Believe: The Fictionality of the Greek Novels, in: Gill & Wiseman 1993, 175–229
Morris, B. *Anthropological Studies of Religion* (Cambridge 1987)
Motte, A. *Les Panthéons des cités. Des origines à la Périégèse de Pausanias. Actes du VI^{e} Colloque international du C.I.E.R.G.A.* (1997) 1re partie, *Kernos* 11 (1998) 7–234.
Müller, D. *Aegypten und die griechischen Isis-Aretalogien, Abh.Leipzig* 53.1 (1961)
Munson, R.V. *Telling Wonders: Ethnographic and Political Discourse in the Work of Herodotus* (Ann Arbor 2001)
Mussies, G. Identification and Self-identification of Gods in Classical and Hellenistic Greece, in: R. van den Broek *e.a.* 1988, 1–18
Mylonopoulos, J. (ed.), *Divine Images and Human Imaginations in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Leiden 2010)
Naerebout, *Attractive Performances. Ancient Greek Dance: Three Preliminary Studies* (Amsterdam 1997)
Nägelsbach, C.F. von, *Die homerische Theologie in ihrem Zusammenhange dargestellt* (Nürnberg 1840)
Needham, R. *Belief, Language, and Experience* (Chicago 1972)
—— Polythetic Classification: Convergence and Consequences, *Man* 10 (1975) 349–369
Nesselrath, H.G. Göttliche Gerechtigkeit und das Schicksal des Menschen in Solons Musenelegie, *MH* 49 (1992) 91–104
Neyrey, J.H. *Give God the Glory: Ancient Prayer and Worship in Cultural Perspective* (Grand Rapids 2007)
Nicolai, W. Sind personale und apersonale Gottesvorstellung miteinander vereinbar oder nicht? *GB* 24 (2005) 15–29
Nilsson, M.P. *Griechische Feste von religiöser Bedeutung* (Leipzig 1906)
Nock, A.D. *Conversion. The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford 1933 = 1961)
—— *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World* I, II (Oxford 1972)

Norden, E. *Agnostos Theos. Untersuchungen zur Formengeschichte religiöser Rede* (Leipzig 1923 = Darmstadt 1956).
Noussia-Fantuzzi, M. *Solon the Athenian, the Poetic Fragments* (Leiden 2010)
Oeming, M. & Schmid, K. (edd.), *Der eine Gott und die Götter: Polytheismus und Monotheismus im antiken Israel* (Zürich 2003)
Oesterheld, Chr. *Göttliche Botschaften für zweifelnde Menschen. Pragmatik und Orientierungsleistung der Apollon-Orakel von Klaros und Didyma in hellenistisch-römischer Zeit* (Göttingen 2008)
Osborne, R. The Erection and Mutilation of the Hermai, *PCPS* 211, NS 31 (1985) 47–73
Oster, R. The Ephesian Artemis as an Opponent of Early Christianity, *JbAC* 19 (1976) 24–44
Oudemans, Th.C.W. & Lardinois, A.P.M.H. *Tragic Ambiguity. Anthropology, Philosophy and Sophocles' Antigone* (Leiden 1987)
Padel, R. *In and Out of the Mind: Greek Images of the Tragic Self* (Princeton 1992)
—— *Whom Gods Destroy: Elements of Greek and Tragic Madness* (Princeton 1995)
Parke, H.W. & Wormell, D.E.W. *The Delphic Oracle* (Oxford 1956)
—— *The Oracles of Zeus* (Oxford 1967)
Parker, R.C.T. *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford 1983)
—— *Athenian Religion: A History* (Oxford 1996)
—— Gods Cruel and Kind, in: Pelling 1997, 143–160
—— Theophoric Names and the History of Greek Religion, in: S. Hornblower & E. Matthews (edd.), *Greek Personal Names: Their Value as Evidence* (*Proc. British Academy* 104, Oxford 2000) 53–79
—— The Problem of the Greek Cult Epithet, *Opuscula Atheniensia* 28 (2003) 173–183
—— *Polytheism and Society at Athens* (Oxford 2005)
—— Aeschylus' Gods: Drama, Cult, Theology, in: J. Jouanna & F. Montanaro (edd.), *Eschyle à l'aube du théâtre occidental* (Entretiens Hardt LV, 2009) 127–154
Pax, E. *EPIPHANEIA. Eine religionsgeschichtliche Beitrag zur biblischen Theologie* (Munich l955)
—— 'Epiphanie' in: *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 5 (1962) 832–909
Peek, W. Fünf Wundergeschichten aus dem Asklepieion von Epidauros, *Abh. Sachs. Ak.* 56 (1963)
Peirce, S. Death, Revelry, and Thysia, *ClAnt* 12 (1993) 219–266
Pelling, C.B.R. (ed.), *Greek Tragedy and the Historian* (Oxford 1997)
—— Educating Croesus: Talking and Learning in Herodotus' Lydian *Logos, ClAnt* 25 (2006) 141–177
Perry, B.E. The Early Greek Capacity for Viewing Things Separately, *TAPA* 68 (1937) 403–427
Petersmann, H. Die Moiren in Aischylos' *Eumeniden* 956–967, *WS* 13 (1979) 37–51
Peterson, E. Heis Theos. *Epigraphische, formgeschichtliche und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Göttingen 1926)
Petropoulou, A. The Sacrifice of Eumaios Reconsidered, *GRBS* 28 (1987) 135–149
Petsas, P.M. – Hatzopoulos, M.B. – Gounaropoulou, L. – Paschidis, P. *Inscriptions du sanctuaire de la Mère des Dieux autochtone de Leukopétra (Macédoine)* (Athens 2000)
Petzl, G. *Die Beichtinschriften Westkleinasiens* (*EA* 22, Bonn 1994)
Pfeijffer, I.L. *Three Aeginetan Odes of Pindar. A Commentary on Nemean V, Nemean III & Pythian VIII* (Leiden 1999)
Pfister, F. 'Epiphanie', *RE* Suppl. 4 (1924) 277–323
Pirenne-Delforge, V. Épithètes cultuelles et interprétation philosophique. À propos d'Aphrodite Ourania et Pandémos à Athènes, *AC* 57 (1988) 142–157
—— *L'Aphrodite grecque* (Kernos Suppl. 4, Liege 1994)

—— *Les Panthéons des cités. Des origines à la Périégèse de Pausanias*. Actes du VI^e^ Colloque international du C.I.E.R.G.A. (1997) 2^e^ partie (Kernos Suppl. 8, 1998)
—— Religion grecque, in: Y. Lehmann *et alii, Religions de l'Antiquité* (Paris 1999) 78–175
—— *Retour à la source: Pausanias et la religion grecque* (Kernos Suppl. 20, Liège 2008)
Pleket, H.W. Religious History as the History of Mentality: The 'Believer' as Servant of the Deity in the Greek World, in: Versnel 1981a, 152–192
Polignac, F. de, *Cults, Territory, and the Origins of the Greek City-state* (Chicago 1995) (Transl. from *La naissance de la cité grecque: cultes, espace et société VIII^e^–VII^e^ siècles avant J.-C.* [Paris 1984])
Polinskaya, I. Lack of Boundaries, Absence of Oppositions: The City-Countryside Continuum of a Greek Pantheon, in: R. Rosen & I. Sluiter (edd.), *City, Countryside, and the Spatial Organization of Value in Classical Antiquity* (Leiden 2006) 61–92
—— Shared Sanctuaries and the Gods of Others: On the Meaning of 'common' in Herodotus 8.144, in: R.M. Rosen & I. Sluiter (edd.), *Valuing Others in Classical Antiquity* (Leiden 2010) 43–70
Porter, B. Nevling (ed.), *One God or Many? Concepts of Divinity in the Ancient World* (Transactions of the Casco Bay Assyriological Institute I [2000])
Pötscher, W. Götter und Gottheit bei Herodot, *WS* 71 (1958) 5–29
—— Das Person-Bereichdenken in der frühgriechischen Periode, *WS* 72 (1959) 5–25
—— Zu Xenophanes Frgm. 23, *Emerita* 32 (1962) 1–13
—— Aspekte Euripideischen Schaffens, *GB* 23 (2000) 23–51
Powell, J.E. *A Lexicon to Herodotus* (Hildesheim 1977 = 1938)
Pownall, F.S. Condemnation of the Impious in Xenophon's *Hellenica, HThR* 91 (1998) 251–277
Price, S.R.F. *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge 1984) (= 1984a)
—— Gods and Emperors: The Greek Language of the Roman Imperial Cult, *JHS* 104 (1984) 79–95 (= 1984b)
—— *Religions of the Ancient Greeks* (Cambridge 1999)
Pruyser, P.W. *A Dynamic Psychology of Religion* (New York etc. 1968)
Pulleyn, S. *Prayer in Greek Religion* (Oxford 1997)
Purvis, A. *Singular Dedications: Founders and Innovators of Private Cults in Classical Greece* (New York – London 2003)
Puttkammer, F. *Quomodo Graeci victimarum carnes distribuerunt* (Diss. Königsberg 1912)
Rad, G. von, *Theologie des alten Testaments* I (Münich 1966[5])
Reitzenstein, R. *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen* (Leipzig 1927[3] = Darmstadt 1966)
Richardson, N.J. *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (Oxford 1974)
Riethmüller, J.W. *Asklepios. Heiligtümer und Kulte* I–II (Heidelberg 2005)
Robert, L. *Documents d'Asie Mineure* (Paris 1987)
Robertson, N. ΣΠΛΑΓΧΝΟΠΤΗΣ, *ZPE* 127 (1999) 175–179
Robertson Smith, W. *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (Edinburgh 1889, 1894[2])
Ronchi, G. *Lexicon theonymon rerumque sacrarum et divinarum ad Aegyptum pertinentium quae in papyris ostracis titulis graecis latinisque in Aegypto repertis laudantur* (Milan) I (1974), II (1974), III (1975), IV (1976), V (1977)
Rose, H.J. *et alii, La notion du divin depuis Homère jusqu'à Platon* (Entretiens Fondation Hardt I, 1954)
Rose, M. Der Ausschliesslichkeitsanspruch Jahwes. Deuteronomistische Schultheologie und Volksfrömmigkeit in der späten Königszeit (Stuttgart etc. 1975)
Rosivach, V.J. *The System of Public Sacrifice in Fourth Century Athens* (Atlanta 1994)

Rowe, C.J. One and Many in Greek Religion, in: A. Portmann & R. Ritsema (edd.), *Oneness and Variety.* (Eranos Jahrbuch 46, Leiden 1976) 37–67
—— 'Archaic Thought' in Hesiod, *JHS* 103 (1983) 124–135
Rückert, B. *Die Herme im öffentlichen und privaten Leben der Griechen. Untersuchungen zur Funktion der griechischen Herme als Grenzmal, Inschriftenträger und Kultbild des Hermes* (Regensburg 1998)
Rudhardt, J. *Notions fondamentales de la pensée religieuse et actes constitutifs du culte dans la Grèce classique* (Genève 1958 = 1992[2])
—— Considérations sur le polythéisme, *RThPh* 16 (1966) 353–364
Rüpke, J. *Die Religion der Römer. Eine Einführung* (Munich 2001) (translated as *The Religion of the Romans*, Cambridge 2007)
Russo J. Prose Genres for the Performance of Traditional Wisdom in Ancient Greece: Proverb, Maxim, Apophthegma, in: L. Edmunds & R.W. Wallace (edd.), *Poet, Public, and Performance in Ancient Greece* (Baltimore 1997) 49–64
Le sacrifice dans l'antiquité (Entretiens Hardt XXVII, 1981)
Salins, M. *How 'Natives' Think: About Captain Cook, for example* (Chicago – London 1995)
Schäfer, Chr. *Xenophanes von Kolophon. Ein Vorsokratiker zwischen Mythos und Philosophie* (Stuttgart 1996)
Schachter, A. (ed.), *Le sanctuaire grec* (Entretiens Hardt XXXVII, 1992)
Scheer, T.S. *Die Gottheit und ihr Bild: Untersuchungen zur Funktion griechischer Kultbilder in Religion und Politik* (Munich 2000)
—— Die Götter anrufen. Die Kontaktaufnahme zwischen Mensch und Gottheit in der griechischen Antike, in: K. Brodersen (ed.), *Gebet und Fluch, Zeichen und Traum. Aspekte religiöser Kommunikation in der Antike* (Münster 2001) 31–56
Scott, K. The Deification of Demetrius Poliorcetes, *AJPh* 49 (1928) 217–239
Sewell-Rutter, N.J. *Guilt by Descent. Moral Inheritance and Decision Making in Greek Tragedy* (Oxford 2007)
Shapiro, H.A. *Art and Cult under the Tyrants in Athens* (Mainz 1989)
Shapiro, S.O. Herodotus and Solon, *ClAnt* 15 (1996) 348–364
—— Proverbial Wisdom in Herodotus, *TAPhA* 130 (2000) 89–118
Sicking, C.M.J. Solon on Wealth, in *idem, Distant Companions. Selected Papers* (Leiden 1998) 7–18 (translation of: Solon's 'Muzenhymne', *Lampas* 17 [1984] 290–300)
Siefert, H. Inkubation, Imagination und Kommunikation im antiken Asklepioskult, *Katathymes Bilderleben* (Wien 1980)
Simon, E. *Die Götter der Griechen* (Munich 1985)
Sineux, P. *Qu'est-ce-qu'un dieu grec? 50 questions* (Paris 2006)
—— *Amphiaraos. Guerrier, devin et guérisseur* (Paris 2007)
Skinner, Q. Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas, *History and Theory* 8 (1969) 3–53
Smith, J.Z. *Map is not Territory. Studies in the History of Religions* (Leiden 1978)
—— *Imagining Religion. From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago – London 1982)
Smith, A.C. & Pickup, S. (edd.), *Brill's Companion to Aphrodite* (Leiden 2010)
Snell, B. *Die Entdeckung des Geistes. Studien zur Entstehung des europäischen Denkens bei den Griechen* (Göttingen 1975[4]) (Translated as *The Discovery of the Mind. The Greek Origins of European Thought* [Harvard Univ. Press 1953])
Sourvinou-Inwood, Chr. Persephone and Aphrodite at Locri: A Model for Personality Definitions in Greek Religion, *JHS* 98 (1978) 101–121, also in: *eadem, Reading Greek culture: Texts and Images, Rituals and Myths* (Oxford 1991), 147–188
—— What is *Polis* Religion? in: O. Murray & S. Price (edd.), *The Greek City From Homer to Alexander* (Oxford 1990) 295–322, also in: Buxton 2000, 13–37 (= Sourvinou-Inwood 2000a)
—— Further Aspects of Polis Religion, *AION (archeol)* 10 (1988) 259–274, also in: Buxton 2000, 38–55 (= Sourvinou-Inwood 2000b)

—— Tragedy and Religion: Constructs and Readings, in: Pelling 1997, 161–186
—— *Tragedy and Athenian Religion* (Lanham 2003)
Stavrianopoulou, E. (ed.), *Ritual and Communication in the Graeco-Roman World* (*Kernos* Suppl. 16, Liege 2006)
Stavrianopoulou, E. – Michaels, A. – Ambos, Cl. (edd.), *Transformations in Sacrificial Practices: From Antiquity to Modern Times* (Berlin 2008)
Stokes, M.C. *One and Many in Presocratic Philosophy* (Cambridge Mass. 1971)
Straten, F.T. van, Did the Greeks Kneel Before their Gods?, *BaBesch* 49 (1974) 159–189
—— Daikrates' Dream. A Votive Relief from Kos and Some Other *kat'onar* Dedications, *BaBesch* 51 (1976) 1–38
—— *Hierà Kalá. Images of Animal Sacrifice in Archaic and Classical Greece* (Leiden 1995)
—— Ancient Greek Animal Sacrifice: Gift, Ritual, Slaughter, Communion, or What? Some Thoughts on Simple Explanations of a Complex Ritual, in: Georgoudi *e.a.* 2005, 15–29
Strauss Clay, J. *The Politics of the Olympus: Form and Meaning in the Major Homeric Hymns* (Princeton 1989)
Taeger, F. *Charisma. Studien zur Geschichte des antiken Herrscherkultes* I–II (Stuttgart 1957–1960)
Tarn, W.W. *Alexander the Great* I–II (Cambridge 1948)
Thomassen, E. Sacrifice: Ritual Murder or Dinner Party? in: M. Wedde (ed.), *Celebrations. Selected papers and discussions from the Tenth Anniversary Symposium of the Norwegian Institute at Athens 1999* (Bergen 2004) 275–285
Thonemann, P. The Tragic King: Demetrios Poliorketes and the City of Athens, in: O. Hekster & R. Fowler (edd.), *Imaginary Kings: Royal Images in the Ancient Near East, Greece and Rome* (Stuttgart 2005) 63–86.
Totti, M. *Ausgewählte Texte der Isis- und Sarapis-religion* (Hildesheim etc. 1985)
Turcan, R. *Les cultes orientaux dans le monde romain* (Paris 1989)
Turner, V.W. *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York 1988)
Usener, H. *Götternamen. Versuch einer Lehre von der religiösen Begriffsbildung* (Bonn 1896)
Vanderlip, V. *The Four Greek Hymns of Isidorus and the Cult of Isis* (Amer. Stud. Pap. 12 [1972])
Verdenius, W.J. *A Commentary on Hesiod, Works and Days 1–382* (*Mnemosyne* Suppl. 1974)
Vermaseren, M.J. (ed.), *Studies in Hellenistic Religions* (Leiden 1979)
Vernant, J.-P. Hestia-Hermès: sur l'expression religieuse de l'espace et du mouvement chez les Grecs, in: Vernant 1971, 124–170 (translated as: Hestia-Hermes: The religious expression of space and movement among the Greeks, *Social Science Information* 8 [1969] 131–168)
—— *Mythe et pensée chez les Grecs* I (Paris 1971)
—— *Religion grecque, religions antiques* (Paris 1976)
—— *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece* (transl. by J. Lloyd, London 1980)
—— *Mythe et religion en Grèce ancienne* (Paris 1990)
—— *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays* (edited by F.I. Zeitlin, Princeton 1991)
Versnel, H.S. Heersercultus in Griekenland, *Lampas* 7 (1974) 129–163
—— Polycrates and his Ring: Two Neglected Aspects, *SSR* 1 (1977) 17–46
—— (ed.), *Faith, Hope and Worship. Aspects of Religious Mentality in the Ancient World* (Leiden 1981) (= 1981a)
—— Religious Mentality in Ancient Prayer, in: Versnel 1981a, 1–64
—— Self-Sacrifice, Compensation and the Anonymous Gods, in: *Le sacrifice dans l'antiquité* (Entretiens Hardt XXVII, 1981) 135–185 (= 1981b)
—— "May he not be able to sacrifice." Concerning a Curious Formula in Greek and Latin Curses, *ZPE* 58 (1985) 247–269

—— What Did Man See when he Saw a God? Some reflections on Greco-Roman epiphany, in: D. van der Plas (ed.), *Effigies Dei. Essays on the History of Religions* (Suppl. Numen LI , Leiden 1987) 42–55
—— *Ter Unus. Isis, Dionysos, Hermes: Three Studies in Henotheism* (*Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion* I, Leiden 1990, 1998[2])
—— Beyond Cursing: The Appeal for Justice in Judicial Prayers, in: Chr. Faraone & D. Obbink (edd.), *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (New York – Oxford 1991)
—— *Transition and Reversal in Myth and Ritual* (*Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion* II, Leiden 1993).
—— The Poetics of the Magical Charm: An Essay in the Power of Words, in: P. Mirecki & M. Meyer (edd.), *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World* (Leiden 2002) 105–158 (= 2002a)
—— Writing Mortals and Reading Gods. Appeal to the Gods as a Dual Strategy in Social Control, in: D. Cohen (ed.), *Demokratie, Recht und soziale Kontrolle im klassischen Athen* (Munich 2002) (= 2002b)
—— Prayers for Justice East and West: New Finds and Publications since 1990, in: R. Gordon & F. Marco (edd.), *Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the international conference held at the University of Zaragoza, 30 Sept.–1 Oct. 2005* (Leiden 2009) 275–356.
Veyne, P. *Les Grecs ont-ils cru à leurs mythes?* (Paris 1983)
—— Une évolution du paganisme gréco-romain: injustice et piété des dieux, leurs ordres ou "oracles", *Latomus* 45 (1986) 259–283
—— La nouvelle piété sous l'empire: s'asseoir auprès des dieux, fréquenter les temples, *RPh* 63 (1989) 175–194
—— Inviter les dieux, sacrifier, banqueter, *Annales HSS* 55 (2000) 3–42
Waters, K.H. *Herodotus the Historian* (London 1985)
Weber, G. *Dichtung und höfische Gesellschaft. Die Rezeption von Zeitgeschichte am Hof der ersten drei Ptolemäer* (Hermes Einzelschr. 62, Stuttgart 1993)
—— Herrscher, Hof und Dichter: Aspekte der Legitimierung und Repräsentation hellenistischer Könige am Beispiel der ersten drei Antigoniden, *Historia* 44 (1995) 283–316
Weinreich, O. *Antike Heilungswunder* (Giessen 1909 = Berlin 1969)
—— *Triskaidekadische Studien* (Giessen 1916)
—— *Menekrates Zeus und Salmoneus. Religionsgeschichtliche Studien zur Psychopathologie des Gottmenschentums in Antike und Neuzeit* (Tübinger Beiträge zur Altertumswissenschaft 18 [1933] = Weinreich 1968, 299–434
—— *Religionsgeschichtliche Studien* (Stuttgart – Darmstadt 1968)
—— *Ausgewählte Schriften* I–IV (Amsterdam 1969–1979)
Weinstock, St. *Divus Julius* (Oxford 1971)
Wengst, Kl. *Christologische Formeln und Lieder des Urchristentums* (Diss. Bonn 1967)
Weniger, L. Theophanien. Altgriechische Götteradvente, *ARW* 22 (1923–4) 16–57
West, M.L. *Hesiod. Theogony* (Oxford 1966)
—— *Studies in Greek Elegy and Iambus* (Berlin – New York 1974)
—— *Hesiod. Works and Days* (Oxford 1978)
—— *The East Face of Helikon* (Oxford 1997)
Wickkiser, B. *Asklepios, Medicine, and the Politics of Healing in Fifth-Century Greece: Between Craft and Cult* (Baltimore 2008)
Wiebe, D. The Role of 'Belief' in the Study of Religion. A Response to W.C. Smith, *Numen* 26 (1979) 234–249
Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, U. von, *Der Glaube der Hellenen* I–II (Berlin 1931=1955[3])
Wilkins, J. *The Boastful Chef. The Discourse of Food in Ancient Greek Comedy* (Oxford 2000)
Williams, B. *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley 1993)

Wörrle, M. & Zanker, P. (edd.), *Stadtbild und Bürgerbild im Hellenismus* (Munich 1995)
Yamagata, N. *Homeric Morality* (*Mnemosyne* Suppl. 131, 1994)
Yunis, H. *A New Creed: Fundamental Religious Beliefs in the Athenian Polis and Euripidean Drama* (Göttingen 1988)
Zajcev, A. Aischylos und die monotheistischen Gedanken bei den Griechen, in: Cancik *e.a.* 1996, 203–212
Zanker, P. *Wandel der Hermesgestalt in der attischen Vasenmalerei* (Bonn 1965)
Zeitlin F.I. (ed.), *Jean-Pierre Vernant, Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays* (Princeton 1991)

INDEX OF PASSAGES CITED

Aelian
NA 9.33 402
VH 12.61 96
Aeschines
2.130–131 278
3.109 118
Aeschylus
Ag. 88 ff. 98
160–163 50
Eum. 297 92
PV 209 77
496 355
516 167
Sept. 76 f. 70
218 70
253 96
Supp. 980 ff. 463
Fr. 70 276
Aelius Aristides
38.715D 488
48.21 413
50.435 411
Aesopus
2 329
10 434
66 329
126, 136, 150 331
137 330
140 333
315 332
App. Perottina 4 333
Alexander Rhetor
Rhet. Gr. III 4–6 57
Andocides
1.71 f.; 32 f. 117
Anthologia Palatina
6.299 365
6.334.3 315
9.72 367
9.316 367
16.186 f. 315
Apollonius Rhodius
3.328 171
Apuleius
Met.
1.8 428
11.2 55
11.4 302
11.6 286
11.15 287, 293
Archilochus
130 40, 423
177 155, 233
298 287
Aristophanes
Ach. 566 52
Av. 480–484
198 ff. 387
518 f. 354, 357
562 f. 481
571 f. 481
611–615 93
723 ff. 482
1501 f. 423
1515–1520 353
1706–1719 480, 483
Equ. 30–34 553, 558
Lys. 1129–1134 101
1280–1315 102
Nub. 269–274 52
367 556
423 f. 556
601 100
1468 f. 111, 556
1478 f. 318, 342
Pax 375–422 362
392 318, 341
657 ff. 342
922 318
1021 ff. 356
1039 ff 363
1059 360
Plut. 660–711 403
696–736 407
748 410, 413
1097 ff. 315
1100–1170 373
1110 361
1114–1132 354, 355
1136 f. 356
1148 376
1164 55
Vesp. 389–394 136, 330
805 336
875 99

Aristotle
Ath. Pol.
42.3 116
55.3 88
Met.
986b27 254
1002a22 330
1074b3 251
Motu an. 4.700a 252
Part.an. 665–672 352
Pol. 1252b26–28 381
1326a32 251
Rhet. 1394a21 221
1395b5–6 221
[*Rhet. Al.*] 439a3 221
Arnobius
Adv. Haer. 3.42 54
Adv. Nat. 1.48 417
1.49 404
Artemidorus 2.34 404
2.37 316, 416
Athenaeus
6.250a 461
6.253 f. 445
7.289 439, 443
8.334b 52
14.636a 140
15.694c 113
Augustinus
C.D. 4.22 290
7.11 65

Babrius
2 399
15 112
20 135
30 303, 494
48 330
57 331
117 335
119 329

Callimachus
Iamb. 10 82
H. Apollo 69–71 82
H.Artemis 7 f. 55
H.Zeus 6 f. 64
Cato *Agr.*
139 58
Cicero *ND*
1.77 382
3.15.39 192
3.21 ff. 64
3.43 468
3.49 494

Cleanthes,
Hymn to Zeus 397
Clemens Alexandrinus
Protr. 4.54.6 440, 452
28.1–3 64
Critias *Sisyphos*
Fr. 88 B 25 558

Democritus Fr. B175 157
Demosthenes
18.141 506
21.51 46
43.66 48
57.54 88
Cassius Dio
61.20.5 302
Diodorus Siculus
8 fr. 32 93
16.11.1 461
16.20.2/6 461
Diogenes Laertius
1.110 58
1.3.69 423
2.40 543
6.37–8 411

Epictetus 2.9.19–20 441
Epicurus *Men.* 123 392
Euripides
Alc. 424 273
Bacch. 140–142
209 290
275 f. 51
1325 f. 558
El. 583 f. 558
Hec. 799–801 558
Heracl. 347–352 113
828–32 114
HF 20–21 173
1106 249
1135 173
1263 51
1340–1346 257
Hipp. 104 135
113 68
359 f. 274, 433
1329 f. 114
Ion 151 f. 291
Or. 1496 ff. 173
Phoen. 350–353 173
588 ff. 97
631f. 78
1364–1376 98
Tro. 885 f 50
Fr. 292.7 427

Heraclitus
Fr. 62 391
Herodotus 179–187, 268–278
1.5.3 532
1.5.4 529, 530
1.26 89, 532
1.32–34 179, 182
1.34–45 184
1.44 73
1.47 398, 428
1.65.3 40
1.86–91 179–184
1.91 286
1.131 f. 382
1.207 183
2.44 144, 493
2.51.1 313,
2.52 270
2.53 77, 320
2.178 104
5.72.3 112
5.92 104
6.81–82 112
6.105 40
7.49 527
7.141.3–4 113
7.189.1 96
8.64.2 93
8.83.2–84.2 93
8.109.3 181, 198
8.129 269
8.144 93, 102, 105
9.65 269
Hesiodus 231–234
Op.
1–10 231, 232, 422
67–78 373
100 ff. 152
108 391
176 ff. 152
238 f. 155
253 f. 233
280–283 155
706 159
Th.
49 424
112 77
411–452 423
413–417 56
901 ff. 233
940 ff. 392
Hippocrates
Art. 46 34
Ep. 15. 402
20 402
Morb. Sacr. 4 411
Hipponax 32 341
Homerus 163–169
Ilias
1.194 38
2.867 387
5.339 ff. 390
7.452 f. 37
8.18–27 252, 424
8.236 f. 170
9.18 170
9.115 ff. 170
9.496 ff. 170
13.59–72 39
15.187–193 77
15.490 ff. 422
16.514 ff. 92, 437
16.849 174
19.86–96 163–179
19.409 f. 167
20.4–9 24
20.242 f. 424
21.443 ff. 37
21.498 ff. 334
22.170 f. 354
24.29 f. 37
24.334 f. 332
24.463 f. 333
24.527 ff. 158
Od.
1.22 ff. 92
1.32–34 156
2.262 39
4.237 425
5.118 181
5.445 39
6.188 f. 158
6.276–281 39
8.339 ff. 334
9.291 386
11.132–4 274
13.311 ff. 38
14.418–456 367
15.234 165
16.161 77
16.181–5 38
16.211 f. 158
17.484 ff. 37
23.11 ff. 422
Homeric Hymns
Aphrodite
31 f. 56
38 423
91 ff. 39

Apollo
189–193 152
347 f. 92
449 ff. 39
Dem. 111 38
Dionys. 1–31 39
Hermes 55–576 319–327

Isocrates
Epist. 3.5 461
Evag. 72 462

Julian
Or. 231A 50

Lactantius
De ira dei 13.20 f. 427
[Longinus]
de Subl. 9.8 390
Lucian
Syr. D. 31 f. 41
Sacr. 10 96
Lucretius 1.31 297
Lycurgus
Leoc. 1 98
Lysias
6.19 543
6.51 543
30 25

Menander
Dys. 413 95
260 ff. 118, 121
450 355
663 92
666 502
Sam. 444 99, 325
Kolax fr. 1 503
Menander Rhetor
2.445.26 57
2.446.8–9 51
Mimnermus
1. 1–4 178
2 152
Minucius Felix
Octavius 22.5 64
Moschus 2 273

New Testament
Acts
9:3–9 39
14:11–13 23
14:15 39
19:27 107
19:28 288
22:6–11 39
26:12–16 39
1 *Cor.*
8:4–6 242
Galatians 4:14 42

Old Testament
Judg. 1:19 396
Ps. 147:6 422
Ovid
Met. 4.11–21 555
8.611–724 42
Pont. 1.1.51 ff. 295
2.8.57 f. 450

Palaiphatus,
Peri Apiston 6 427
Pausanias
2.2.8 79
2.24.3 79
2.27.2 410
2.31.5 79
4.27.5–6 102
4.31.8 107
4.33.1 64
5.22 ff. 79
6.15.4 80
6.20.2 100
6.26.5 343
7.22.2 343
7.27.1 342
8.34 175
9.19.5 81
Philemon
118 (*CAF*) 473
Philippides
25 (*PCG*) 466
Philodemus
Piet. 14 97
Philostratus
Her. 129
VA 3.41 51
6.3. 58
Pindarus
Isthm. 5.14 439
5.52 158
Nem 6.1 391
Pyth. 2.49–52 157
Plato
Apol. 24c 543, 556, 557
26c; 27c; 35d 543
27 d–e 545
Cra. 400e 51, 52

Euthd. 302b 110
Euthphr. 3 485
Leg. 4, 716b 118, 129
5.738b–c 99
10.885b 450, 542, 543
10.909d–910a 134
Phdr. 279bc 94
Phlb. 12c 51, 52
Prt. 358a 52
Pliny *HN* 2.27 402
Plutarch
Ages. 21 439
Arist. 11.3 47
11.3–5 100
Cor. 38.4 418
Demetr. 2.2. 449, 453
10–15 466
10.3 452
10.4 451
12.1–12.2 452, 453
18 476
41.6 f. 449, 475
46.2 451
Dion 29 463
46 464, 461
Pel. 21 275
Per. 8.9 495
Them. 15.1 93
De garr. 502 368
De Is. et Os. 71 51
Adv. Col. 72
De superst. 166b ff. 411
Non posse suav. 22 425
Pollux 8.105 f. 107
Polyaenus
Strat. 6.50 89
Polybius
4.62.3 111
7.9 108
32.15.13 111
36.17.2 171
Protagoras Fr. 80 B4 558

Sappho 1.19–24 424
Semonides 1 153
Servius
ad Georg. I.5 251
ad Aen. 2.116 473
Simonides 527 153
Simplicius
de caelo 358.27 427
Solon
4.1–4 113
13 201–212
27.17–18 182
Sophocles
*Ant.*199 98
fr. 452 101
fr. 941 55
Stobaeus 1.6.24 48
4.1.48 117
Strabo 8.3.12 313
8.6.15 91
Suetonius
Nero 20 302

Tertullian
De spect. 25 298
Theognis
133 ff. 159, 211
143 f. 156
157 f. 158
161–164 211
197–208 211
373–382 154
661–667 211
731–752 211
743–746 154
833–836 157
Theophrastus
16.5. 330
Thucydides
2.16 119
2.71. 99
3.38.4 475
4.87.2 99
4.97.2–3 111
6.27.1 336
Tibullus 1.3.27–8 425

Valerius Max. *Praef.* 450
Varro
Ant. Div.
fr. 6–12, 27 252
Vettius Valens 5.9.2 273
Virgil
Aen. 2.351 101

Xenophanes
1 256
11 245, 381
14, 15, 16 46, 380
23 244, 247
24, 25, 26 246, 265
34 256, 264
Xenophon
Ages. 11.13 460
Apol. 11 556
Anab.
3.1.5 47

6.4.23 423, 232
7.3.12 461
3.1.12 63
5.3.4–11 96
6.1.22 49, 63
6.1.31 503
7.6.18 503
7.8.4 63, 519
Hell.
3.2.22 111
Cyr. 1.6.1. 501
3.3.21 f. 106
Mem.
1.1.1 ff. 543, 556
1.3.1 556
3.8.10 131
4.3.13 495
Symp. 8.9 71, 519
Xenophon Ephes.
5, 13 288

Inscriptions

CIL
VI 13740 512
X 3800 300
CMRDM I 155 80
EG 815 436
I.Cret.
I xvii
8–16 417
8, 17–19 400
18 409
I ix 1 76
III iii 3 A 512
I.Ephesos 2 107
24 107
I.Erythrae 205 360
I. Lindos 183 114
I.Mylasa I 119 359
IG
I^3 234. 21 114
977a–b; 980 119
1021 94
II^2 112 511
1006–1036 117
1006 ll.65–71 116
1945 80
IV^2 1 121–124 400
1 126 413
1 129 502
V 2 525 81
VII 3101 81
XII.3.398 501
5.220 114
XII.6.2, 604 55
Suppl. pp. 98/9 283
XIV 268 505
966 411
IGR I 656 78
ILLRP I 291–3 58
ILS 2094 f. 108
LSA(*M*) 20 293
73, 6 133
LSCG 1 114
110 112
LSS 77, 6–7 357
129, 4–6 357
NGSL 3 356
OGI(*S*) 6 451
332 445
SEG
1.247 120
1.248 120
3.406 126
10.341 94
16.648 127
19.698 88
30.1608 130
33.736 436
35.589 92
36.267 132
41.1003 444
41.1544 281
43.756 107
48.1961 f. 299
53.1344 295
54.1596 297
Syll.^{3}
360, 3 68
527 76
826C 118
889 286
747 494
1131 290

Papyri

PGM I, 96–132 284
IV 2344 53
XXIV 1 288
PGurob 1.23 301
PMichigan 4686 293
POxy 935 95
1380 56, 40
1381, ll. 40 291
l. 131 411
1382 290
3239 288
3781 471
PSI 1162 135
1290 135
PTebt 413 l. 3 95

GREEK WORDS

ἄγνωστος θεός 58
ἀδύνατα 406, 408, 418
ἄθεος 24, 553
αἰσθητός 404
ἀληθής, ἀληθινός 446, 450
ἄλλοτὲ ἄλλος 158, 159, 423
ἄμβροτος 310, 321
ἀμηχανίη 158
ἄναξ 136
ἀνίκητος 293
ἀνώνυμος (of gods, altars) 58
ἀπάντησις 444
ἀπίθανα 406, 418
ἀποδημία(ι) 90 f.
ἀποθεόω 485
ἄργματα 368
ἀρετή (miracle) 290, 413, 464
Ἄτη/ἄτη 163–178, 204, 209
ἀτιμία 117
αὐτόχθων 68
ἀφίδρυμα 109
ἀφίκεσθαι (come as supplicant) 410

βασίλισσα 287
βόθρος 310, 311
βωμός 311

γείτων 95, 100, 126, 136, 374
γνώμη 218–225, 230

δαίς 312, 367–369
δεισιδαίμων 127
δεσπότης 128, 140, 292, 410
διδασκαλία 130
δίκη 155, 156, 209
δόλιος 373
δυνάμεις 410
δυνατὸν ἐξ ἀδυνάτου 419
δώδεκα θεοί 508, 509

ἔγχωρ(ι)ος 95, 98, 99, 101, 116
εἱμαρμένη 171
εἷς Διόνυσος 142, 302
εἷς (ὁ) θεός 141, 244, 247, 280, 281, 296–301
εἴτε…εἴτε 52, 53
Ἑκαταῖα 365, 366
ἔκπληξις 478

(ἐκ)φορά 372
(τὸ) Ἑλληνικόν 103
ἓν καὶ πᾶν 300
ἐπαμφοτερίζειν 441, 489, 491, 492
ἐπήκοος 449
ἐπίγειος 404
ἐπιδημία 90–92
ἐπίκλησις 79
ἐπιφάνεια 91, 92
ἐπωνυμία 77
ἔρμα 336
ἑταιρίζω 332
ἕταιρος 341, 370, 375
εὐεργέτης 460, 464, 486
εὐτυχέω 180
ἔφηβος 116–118
ἐφημέριος 153

ἡγέομαι 482, 486, 542, 543, 553, 558, 559
ἡρωικαὶ τιμαί 461

θάρσει 409
(τὸ) θεῖον 180
θεῖος 460
(οἱ) θεοί 268–278
  Ἑλλήνιοι 105
  Ὀλύμπιοι 501
  πάντα δύνανται 424, 425
θεομάχος 292–293
θεομοιρία 359
θεοποιέω 485
(ὁ) θεός 169, 176–178, 185, 270–272
θεὸς ἐν ἀνθρώποις 462
θεός ὥς 460, 463, 464
θεραπεύω/θεραπευτής 128, 291
θεῶ, see: τὸ θεῶ
θυλήματα 363

ἰάματα 400, 404–416
ἴατρα 416
ἱερὰ δημόσια 133
ἱερὰ ἰδιωτικά 133
ἱεροφοιτᾶν 118
ἱκέτας 410
ἱκετεύω 411, 412
ἱλαρός 445, 447
ἱλασκέσθαι 44

ἰσόθεοι τιμαί 457
ἰσόθεος 460

καιρός 445, 448
καλέω 73
καταιβάτης 452
κατ᾽ ἐπιταγήν 127
κατ᾽ ὄναρ 128
καθ᾽ ὕπνον 128
κατὰ κέλευσιν 127, 414
κατὰ πρόσταγμα 127
κατέχω 55, 89, 108
κλέος 326
κνίση 310, 353, 355, 361, 363
κοινός 103
κοσμοκράτωρ 435
κράτος 464
κύκλος 159, 423, 553
κύριος, κυρία 128, 136, 158, 287, 291, 446, 451
κωλῆ 355, 361

λέξις εἰρομένη 214, 229
Λιταί 170
λιτή 412
λόγοι εἰσιτήριοι 484
λώιον καὶ βέλτιον 46, 47

μάλιστα 505, 506, 511
μακαρισμός 290
μανία 175
μέγας 288, 290, 414, 419, 433
μεγιστότατος 433
μηρία/μῆρα 319, 352, 355, 361, 363
Μήτηρ Θεῶν Αὐτόχθων 68
Μήτηρ Φρύγια 69
moῖρα/Moῖρα 165, 166, 185, 186, 203, 208
μόνος 289, 296, 300–303
μυρι/πολυώνυμος 55, 56, 300

νέμεσις 183, 532
Νεφελοκοκκυγία 481
νομίζω 467, 473, 481, 482, 485, 486, 492, 542–545, 554–558
(τὰ) νόμιμα 111
νυμφόληπτος 119, 125–127, 129
ν(υν)φῶν λάτρις 127

ξυνουσία 129

ὀδμή 310
ὄλβ(ι)ος 182, 183, 529, 535
ὅμοιος 103
ὁμολογέω 415
Ὁμόνοια 510
ὄναρ 406
ὁσίη/ὅσιος 322, 323
οὐ(κ ἐκ)φορά 356
οὐλαί 363

παν- 432
πάνθειον 29
πάντες θεοί 89, 105, 144, 270, 501–507
παντοκράτωρ 435
παραδειγματισμός 411, 414
παράδοξον 408
παράλειψις 167, 168, 192, 193
πάρεδρος 114
παρεῖναι/παρουσία 446–449, 473, 482
πεπρωμένη 185
ποιητὴς θεῶν 485, 488
πολίτης (divine) 96
πολύθεος 24
πολυώνυμος, see: μυρι/
προπρεσβεύειν (of gods) 97
προσκύνησις 411, 412
προσομιλεῖν 118, 129
προστάτις 137
πρῶτος καὶ μόνος 298, 302

ῥεῖα 388, 422
ῥηίδιος 158
ῥυσμός 158, 159

σκύβαλα 366
σπλάγχνα 353–364
σύμβουλος 342
σύμμαχος (of gods) 93, 113
συμφορή 182, 529, 530
σῶστρα 416
σωτήρ 413, 451, 460, 463, 464

ταραχῶδες 182, 528
τέλος 206–209
τί να κάνομε 218
τίσις 209
τλημοσύνη 158, 159
τράπεζα/τραπέζωμα 356, 358–361, 443
τρισκαιδέκατος θεός 489
τὼ θεῶ 80

ὕβρις 155, 156, 206
ὕπαρ 406
ὑποκριτής 471
ὑπουργὸς τῶν θεῶν 126, 128

φάσμα 402, 404
φιλανθρωπότατε 318, 341, 402
φίλε, φίλτατε 136, 137, 341, 342
φίλοι (of kings) 446
φρονεῖν ὅσια 415
φθόνος/φθονερόν 180–183, 528
τε καὶ ταραχῶδες 528

χαῖρε/χαῖρω 51, 52, 99, 126, 136, 444
χρηματίζω 51

ψίθυρος/ψιθυριστής 343

Ὥραι 73
ὡς 473, 488, 493, 494
see also: as if

Italic/Latin Words

frequentare templa 118

sive…sive 57
sive deus, sive dea 58

Tursa Serfia Serfer Martier 115

unus/una 289, 297, 300

GENERAL INDEX

acclamation 283, 290, 291, 293, 296, 298–300, 302–303
acknowledge (= believe in) 541, 543, 544, 545, 558
adunaton 306, 408, 428, 429
adversion 141
Agamemnon 163–169
Aglauroi/Aglauros 81, 117
Aiakides 93
Aiax 93
Alexarchos 440, 441
alimentary notions 488, Ch. IV *passim*
'all the (other) gods' 89, 270, 278, 368, 501–507
almightiness 394, 395
  see: omnipotence
alternation of luck 187, 529, 530
Aly, Wolf 213
Amphiaraos 404, 405, 494, 496
Amun 396
analogy 65
Anaximenes 247
anonymous gods 272, 273, 275, 305, 306, 515
Anselmus 429
anthropomorphism 245, 246, 249, 265, 266, 379–383, 388, 389, 402, 424, 494, 528
Antigonos 451, 466, 467
Aphroditai 80
Aphrodite 71, 424, 433, 446, 449
  Einodia 81
  Ourania 71, 81
  Pandemos 71, 81
Apollo 61, 70, 78, 90, 91, 131, 185, 186, 269, 310, 326, 398, 535, 536
  Aguieus 78, 97–99, 136, 148, 518, 519
  Archegetes 75
  Kareios 75, 76, 398
  Karneios 82
  Klarios 74, 75, 82
  Patro(i)os 8, 89, 110
  Sminthios/eus 56, 57, 77, 78
Apollones 80
apparition in dreams 37
arbitrariness of the gods/Zeus 152–155, 157–159, 198, 204, 206, 208, 230, 231, 279, 528
archaic pessimism 152–155, 210
Archedamos of Thera 119, 120, 126, 131
aretalogy 283–289, 301
  of Kume 283–285, 397, 412
Artemides 81
Artemis 23, 41, 75, 520
  Ephesia 69, 76, 106, 107, 131
  Leukania 76
  Leukophruene 76, 91
  Orthia 124
  Peldekeitis 76
  Persica 106
  Prothuraia 74
asebeia process 139
'as if' 144, 279, 473, 474, 489, 490–493
'as is' 474, 489, 490
Asklepios 41, 91, 92, 108, 128, 136, 294, 400–421
associations, see: religious
asyndetic, see: paratactic
atheism 292, 443, 555, 556, 558
Athena 91, 113, 521, 523
  Areia 117
  Hygieia 86, 518
  Nike 521
  Polias 518
  Skiras 518
  impersonated by Phue 448
  spouse of Demetrius 452
Aubriot, Danièle 412
'Augenblicksglauben' 480, 492
Austin, John L. 172, 219

Bakker, Egbert J. 226–229
'balkanisation of the brain' 84
barbarian gods 353
Barley, Nigel 471
Barnes, Timothy 246, 267
Barrett, Stanley R. 86
Barth, Karl 385
behaviourism 379–381
belief/believe 292, 465–471, 476–477, 481, Appendix IV
  definitions of 548, 549
  lack of 292, 414, 427–430, 556–559
  objections to the term Appendix IV
Bendis 138

Bernstein, Basil B. 491
'binary disease' 145
blame attribution 156, 170–174, 219, 425
Bloch, Maurice 472, 490, 491, 524
Bohr, Niels 260
Boreas 96
Borg, Barbara, 455
Bremmer, Jan 145
Burkert, Walter 26–36, 240, 248, 265, 313–315
burlesques (Hermaic) 329–332, 343–348
Burnet, John 247

calendar 61
calendar of Erchia 61, 62, 70
cave 126, 133
central/normal vs. eccentral/marginal 144, 145
Cereres 81
Ceres Africana 110
Chafe, Wallace 83, 227
chance 182, 185, 204, 211, 280, 529–530
chaos vs. order/kosmos 29–35, 114, 116, 142–149, 212
children paying for the sins of their parents 155, 185, 186, 208
Christ 306
Christian theology 236, 237
Christianizing approach to Greek religion 539, 541, 547–554
chthonian, see: Olympian
city-god 95, 113, 547,
Clay, Jenny Strauss 319, 368
cognitive approach to (Greek) religion 540, 542, 544, 557–559
cognitive dissonance 87, 148, 217, 259
coherence/consistency 197
  drive/strain towards 86, 167, 190–195, 205, 207, 213, 217, 236, 237, 253–257, 530, 531, 535
  lack of 202–205, 213, 214, 218, 259
Coleridge, Samuel T. 477
complementarity 260–264
confession (of guilt) 295, 414, 415
confession texts (Maeonian) 290–295, 415
congruence, see: coherence
context 272, 278, 550
contradiction 86, 247, 253, 254, 260
  in proverbs 224, 225
Coptic spells 396
'creative charity' 191, 200
Croesus 179–186, 531–536
culinary notions, see: alimentary
'cultural models' 172, 222
Cybele 138
Cyclope(s) 386, 387
Cyrus 185

Damateres 80, 114
defamiliarize 12, 14, 16, 123
dehumanize 123, 237, 438
Demeter 114, 146, 445, 496
Demetrieia 452, 453
Demetrios Poliorketes 444–456, 475
  Ithyphallic hymn for 444–455
dependence 305
Derenne, Eudore 543, 555
descriptive language 299, 428
'desperately alien' 11–18, 196, 436, 541
Despoina 81, 287
Detienne, Marcel 384
Diagoras 554
Dilthey, Wilhelm 389
Diogenes Cynicus 411
Diogenes of Oinoanda 97
Dione 45
Dionysos 91, 452, 497
  Makedonikos 68
Dioskouroi 91
divine instructions 127, 413
divine residence(s) 89–94
Dodds, Eric 28, 160, 162, 220, 230, 455, 527
domestic cult 122
double awareness 441, 474, 477, 489
double motivation 164
'double track course' 267
Douglas, Mary 149
Douris of Samos 456, 457
dream visions 127, 128, 134
Droogers, André 474
Durkheim, Émile 263

'eccentric' sanctuaries 113
'École de Paris' 26, 35, 147, 384, 385, 388
ecstasy 139
Edelstein, Emma & Ludwig 411, 416
Ego-proclamations 284, 396, 397
elative functions of praise 297, 299, 302
elect god 124, 133, 135
Empedokles 464, 465
endurance 158, 159

entry (ceremonial) 444, 451
enviousness (of the gods) 181, 182, 186, 187, 275, 517–531
ephebe 320, 340
Epidauros 108, 400–404, 415, 416, 420, 421
epiphany 37, 38, 40–42, 91, 92
epithet 60–80
Erasmus 259, 260
Erides 81
etic-emic 73, 243, 548, 551
Euhemeros 442
Eumaios 367–369
Eumenides 494
Everitt, Nicholas 395
evil 395, 397
excessive luck/wealth 180–182, 202
exclusion from cult 112
exclusive affection, see: henotheism
excuse formulas 165, 169–174, 219, 425
expressive/phatic language 299, 428

fable 327–335
Fahr, Wilhelm 542, 543, 555, 557, 558
family resemblance 261
Fate/fate, destiny 166–176, 185–187, 203, 208–211, 219, 220, 230–232, 271–276, 285–287
(the) Fates 219, 220
Feeney, Dennis 147, 554
Festugière, André-J. 122, 285
Feyerabend, Paul 235, 265, 306
fictionality of ritual 473, 477–479
Finkelberg, Aryeh 254
foreign gods 138–141
François, Gilbert 268, 276
Fränkel, Hermann 204, 213, 214
Freudenthal, Jacob 252

'(der/das) ganz Andere' 385
garden (votive/religious) 120, 121
'generous audience' 478
Georges, Robert A. 219
Georgoudi, Stella 513, 514
Gildersleeve, Basil L. 218
Giordano-Zecharya, Manuela 548–559
Gladigow, Burckhardt 272
gnomic expression 218–225, 230
  (experimenting with) 462
'gnomologisches Wissen' 218, 230
god (qualities) 381–383, 388–393
'godenzonen' 462
god's portion 353, 354, 359–364
gods
  absent 446, 449
  disturbing 180, 182, 527, 528
  mortal/human 403–405, 417, 438
  non-existent 446, 449
  'other' 385–388
  as persons Ch. IV *passim*
  = robins 388
(the) Gods of the Greeks 104–106
(the) gods of the Persians 106
(the) gods of the Pisidians 106
(the) gods of the Romans 106
Gordon, Richard 537
Gould, John 199, 220, 393
Grant, Robert M. 426
gratitude 464, 486
great 288, 299, 413, 435
Groningen, Bernard van 213
groves (sacred) 120, 121, 131

Habicht, Christian 457
Hagia Eirini 110
Hagia Paraskevi 67
Hagios Georgios 67, 148
Harrison, Thomas 199, 200, 546, 553
haughty thoughts 184
Hekate 366, 426
Helfer, James S. 459
Helios 440, 441, 453
henotheism 129, 138–142, 243, 244, 249, 280–304, 412, 414, 432–436, 479
Hera 115
Heraia 457
Herakles
  Kallinikos 76
  of Thasos 144, 493, 494
heridatory guilt, see: children
herm 330, 335–352
  at an altar 349
Hermaia
  agonistic festival 340, 351
  lucky finds 364–366, 369
Hermes 42, Ch. IV *passim*
  Agoraios 343, 365
  Chthonios 374
  dearth of temples 350, 351
  diets of 352–367
  Dolios 342
  oracular functions 343
  Pantokrator 374
  sacrificial herald 348, 349
Hermokles of Kyzikos 445
hero cult 461
heroes 100, 420

Herzfeld, Michael 172, 173, 219
Herzog, Rudolf 408
high intensity (ritual, belief) 434, 548, 554, 558, 559
Hittite self-dividing gods 109
homonymous gods 62–65, 82, 83, 107–110, 143, 146
'honest hypocrisy' 470, 471, 475, 477, 492
Hornung, Erik 260
house gods 135
Huizinga, Johan 474
human sacrifice 274, 275
human's portion 323, 356–358, 360, 372
Hyg(i)eia 136
Hymn of Isidorus 286, 300
hymn of Isyllos, see: Isyllos

'I am a parrot' 458
icon 67
illusion 478, 479
image/statue = god 79
immanence 261
implicitness 168, 192, 193, 533
inconsistency 191, 200, 201, 207, 210, 212, 217, 219, 254, 256, 257, 261
'indicative mood' 474
initiatory myth and ritual 145
interconnected cosmology 85, 191, 216
intonation unit 227, 228
invincible 293
Isis 55, 56, 283–289, 300, 301, 306
Isyllos (hymn/paean of) 92, 421
ithyphallic 343

Jaeger, Werner 249
Jaillard, Dominique 309
Jameson, Michael 122, 367
jokes 443, 444
Jost, Madeleine 36, 147
justice of the gods/Zeus 155, 156, 159–161, 198, 204, 206, 207, 230, 231, 233

Kadletz, Edward 369
Kahn, Laurence 312, 319
Kellendonk, Frans 470
Kennedy, John S. 380
Kephisos 95
kerukeion 326
King, Charles 470, 546, 547, 550
king(ship) 452
Klearchos of Heraklea 442, 490
Kleinknecht, Hermann 484
Kleomenes 112
kneeling (before a god) 129, 411, 412

language of the gods 389
language of praise 433
Lardinois, André 216, 222, 223
Lesher, James 257
Lewis, James H. 210
lex sacra from Selinous 63, 64, 144, 494, 505
libation 264
LiDonnici, Lynn R. 408
linear reading 208, 209
Linforth, Ivan M. 279
'living presence response' 479
Lloyd, Geoffrey 402
Lloyd-Jones, Hugh 160–162, 230
low intensity, see: high intensity
Lua Saturni 115
ludic/ludism 441, 471, 473, 474, 476, 490, 491
Luhmann, Niklas 307
Luther, Martin 237
luxurious multiplicity 199, 210
Lysander 456, 457
Lysandreia 457

Madonna(s) 66
magic 139, 373
magnification 290, 299
marginal(ity) 317
Maria/Holy Virgin 66, 521–523
Maurach, Gregor 202, 207
maxim 220, 221, 230
megatheism 288
Meilichios 62, 63, see also: Zeus
men = pigs 458
Menekrates 439–444, 489–491
Midday Demon 40
Mikalson, John 36, 146, Appendix II
miracle 289, 299, 296, 326
  healing 400–419
  punitive 409
  proves deity 406–410
moira/Moira 163–175, 185, 233
monolatry 243
monotheism 241, 244, 247, 248, 252–257, 265, 275, 281, 282, 296, 300
Mother of the Gods 69
mourning for animals 493
Müller, Max 281
multilocality of gods 89–94, 100

multiperspectiveness 87, 94, 114, 143, 146–149, 474, 487, 494
multiple causation 162, 171, 173
multiplicity 215, 216
Murray, Gilbert 456
'my god' 137

Naerebout, Frederik 546
name of god 49–59
Naukratis 104, 105
Nauta, Ruurd 469
Needham, Rodney 539, 548
Nemeseis 81
Nemesis 94
Nesselrath, Heinz-Günter 202, 207
New criticism 213
new gods 103–140, 303
  construction of 480–488
Nicolai, Walter 267
Nilsson, Martin 275, 276, 456, 542
Nock, Arthur D. 285, 289, 383, 457, 524
'not yet' 216, 217
nympholeptos 119, 120, 125–127, 129
nymphs 95, 119–121, 127, 129, 130, 133, 136, 368, 369, 468

oath of Amphictyons 117, 118
oath of the *epheboi* 117, 118
oath of Hannibal/Philippos 108
'of course' 78, 110, 518, 519, 525, 541
Olympian versus chthonian 114, 115
omnipotence (divine) 28, 232, 284, 287, 296, 303, 392–400, 406–410, 418, 422–438
  in Jewish-Christian theology 394, 395, 429, 430
  arbitrary 157, 232, 284, 285, 396, 397, 418–424
  arguments against 427–430
omnipresence (divine) 437
omniscience (divine) 28, 393, 418, 437
one god (Xenophanean) 244–266
  see also: εἷς θεός
oneness 244, 296–300, 304
'opinion molecules' 172
oracle
  questions 43–49
  oracle of Klaros 74–76
orality 226–229
order versus chaos, see: chaos
'otherness'/'the Other' 11–18, 384–388
Otto, Rudolf 385
Oudemans & Lardinois 216
Ouranopolis 440
overdetermination 174
overinterpretation 167, 195, 469, 524

Padel, Ruth 164, 215
Pan 40, 41, 94, 95, 121, 126, 127, 132
Panagia 66, 71
panhellenic 102–105
Pantalkes 120, 129
pantheism 265
'pantisis' 207, 208
paradox, see: inconsistency
paralipsis 167, 168, 192, 193, 201, 533
parallelismus membrorum 284, 396
parasitos 346
paratactic style 199, 213–218, 528
Parker, Robert 555
patricompassionism 429
Paul (St.) 1, 15, 16, 18, 19
Peisetairos 480–484
Pelling, Christopher 200, 532–537
Perry, Ben E. 214
personal devotion 119–137, 142
pessimism, see: archaic
phallus 346
Pharsalos 120
phatic language, see: expressive
Philemon (comicus) 473
Philippos II 443, 461, 488–490
pigs = men 493
pilgrimage 132, 133
Pindar 218
Pitsa (cave of) 127
play (ritual) 470–480
  see also: ludism
plurality 239, 240
polar expression 249, 284, 396, 397, 422–426
Polinskaya, Irene 103, 104
polis religion 122, 123
polyinterpretability 192
Polykrates 180, 181, 195
Polyphemos 386, 387
polytheism Ch.1 *passim,* 239, 247, 253, 255, 257, 267, 275
polythetic class 261, 400, 467
polytropos 234, 374
Poseidon 145, 453, 496
post-modernism 193
'pragmatics' 178, 228
prayer 43–60
  dubitative formulas 49–60
  'of contestation' 154
  for justice 232

language 383
philosophical 264
Price, Simon 458, 468, 541, 544, 555
priest's portion 356, 359, 361, 366
Pritchett, W. Kendrick 89
private cults 119–122, 129–136
prohibition of access to temple 112
projection 388
Protesilaos (heros) 129
proverb 218–225, 230
see also: gnomic
Pruyser, Paul W. 477
Pulleyn, Simon 53, 54, 412
punishment (divine) 294, 295
Purvis, Andrea 130–132

religion, objections to the use of the term 551
religious associations 138–142
ritual (performative nature) 471–473
ritualist view of Greek religion 541, 542, 544–546, 552–557
Robert, Louis 76
Robertson Smith, William 542
Rüpke, Jörg 72
ruler cult Ch. VI *passim*
ancient doubts 465, 466
modern doubts 456, 457
construction of 460–465
ludic/fictional nature of 471–480
political religion 457

Sabazios 138
sacred slavery 129, 291
sacrifice 348–364, 367–370
of Hermes in *H.Hermes* 310–312, 322–324, 371, 372
sacrificial strike 353
Sarapis 286, 291, 293, 294, 300
Schleiermacher, Friedrich 243
Scodel, Ruth 478
Selinous, see: *lex sacra*
sense (making sense) 195, 200, 201, 213
separative cosmology 84, 191, 216
Shapiro, Susan O. 224, 527–531
Sicking, C.M.J. 209, 210
simultaneity 474, 489, 490
'sincere pretence', see: honest
singular plurals 268–270
Skinner, Quentin 190, 272
Slater, William J. 222
Slings, Simon R. 226–229
Smith, Jonathan Z. 87, 201
Smith, Wilfred C. 539, 541, 548
Snell, Bruno 164, 215, 216
socializing (god with men) 332–334, 337–343
Socrates 71, 485, 488, 519
charge against 553, 554–558
Solon 179–186, 201–212, Appendix III
soter 413, 451, 460, 463, 464, 486, 487
Sourvinou-Inwood, Christiane 116, Appendix IV
speech theory 178, 226–229
Stoa 251, 252, 397
Straten, Folkert van 124, 129, 350, 359
'subjunctive mood' 474, 491
submission (to a god) 128, 129, 291, 304
summachos (of gods) 93
sumpoliteia
of gods and men 97
Sun (god) 446, 448
superhuman 406, 407, 419
supernatural 406, 407, 419
suppli(c)ant 408, 410, 411
supplication 411, 412
'surely', see: 'of course'
Swinburne, Richard 236
syncretism 56

Tarn, William W. 457
temple
sitting in 411
violation of 111
Thales 249
theatricality (of ritual) 475, 479
theft of god's statue 348
theodicy 156, 198, 207, 236, 397, 430
continuity/change of 160–162
Christian 394, 395
theolepsy 127
theologia negativa 255
theology (Christian) 236, 237
theophoric names 137
'theopoetics' 480, 485
theos ('the god') 170, 176–178, 185–188, 270, 271
polythetic polysemy 263, 47, 468
theoxenia 358, 367, 443, 452
totalizing comparisons 469
tragic warner 180
transcendence 261, 262
trickster 317
Tritopatores 494
Trygaios 362, 363
Tuche 277, 278, 287, 306

turannos 287
Turner, Victor 474, 491
(the) twelve gods 144, 269, 270, 310, 313, 489, 507–515
  constitution of 508, 509
  cults of 508

unavailability (of gods) 273
unique(ly) 297, 304
unity (search for) 26, 218, 239, 307
  in diversity 212, 216, 240, 251, 253, 266, 305, Appendix III
universal worship 289
unknown god 32
Utopian imagery 482

Vari (cave) 119, 120, 125
Vernant, Jean-Pierre 26–36, 70, 314, 315, 392, 394, 438, 517
Veyne, Paul 83, 85, 282
violation, see: temple
votive religion/gifts 124–126, 131

wealth 203, 204
Weinreich, Otto 489
West, Martin. L. 266
'white lies' 169, 170
Wiebe, Donald 540
Wilamowitz, Ulrich von 34, 254, 312, 452
Williams, Bernard 160, 216
willing suspension of disbelief 477, 479
Wittgenstein, Ludwig 261

Xenokratia 130
Xenophanes 244–266, 275, 279, 380
Xenophon 131, 132, 277

Zeus 62, 63, 69, 70, 113, 163–179, 251, 306, 439
  Aphrodisios 114
  Apotropaios 74
  Basileus 62, 63, 519
  Chthonios 79
  Damatrios 114
  Heraios 114, 511
  Herkeios 88, 111, 518
  Hetaireios 73
  Hypsistos 79
  Katharsios 73
  Ktesios 70, 518
  Meilichios 62, 63, 74, 519
  Olympios 62
  Patroos 111
Zeus and Hermes 23, 42